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OUR CHURCH AND HER
SERVICES.

BY THE

RIGHT REV. ASHTON OXENDEN, D.D.

BISHOP OF MONTREAL, AND METROPOLITAN OF CANADA.

Eighteenth Thousand.

LONDON :

HATCHARDS, 187 PICCADILLY.

HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO. 32 PATERNOSTER ROW.

1870.

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PART THE FIRST.

MEMBERSHIP WITH THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

WHY AM I A CHRISTIAN ?

PROBABLY every one who takes up this Book is a Christian. That is to say, he is a Christian by profession ; he has been received into the number of Christ's followers by Baptism ; he has been enlisted into Christ's army ; he has the mark of Christ's followers upon him.

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Now, did you ever ask yourself *Why am I a Christian ?* Perhaps, if you spoke honestly and truly, you would give some such answer as this to the question—

"I am a Christian, because my Father and Mother were Christians before me ; and I was

brought up to be one." But what a poor reason this is, if we have no better! Why, at this rate, if our Parents had been Jews or Mahomedans, we too should have been content to be the same.

Of course a rightminded person would feel disposed to walk in the way that his Parents trod before him. But then in so important a matter as religion, he should be sure that it is the right and true way, the way that God has marked out for him.

How is it in worldly things? If a man is a Soldier, or a Sailor, or a Tradesman, or a Lawyer, he can tell you *why* he chose this or that profession. He can give you his reasons for the particular line he has taken. But on the subject of Christianity some have never thought. They have taken everything as a matter of course. They were baptized, because others were. They read their Bible, because they have been taught to think that it is the right thing to do. They go to church, because their neighbours go. They hope to have a Christian Minister to visit them on their sick-bed; and when they die to have a Christian Burial. And is not this with a

great many persons the sum and substance of their Christianity?

Now for another reason. I will mention one, which I believe many would give, if they spoke honestly—" *I am a Christian, because to be so, outwardly at least, will cost me but little trouble.*"

There was a time when it cost *much* even to make a profession of Christianity. The very name of Christian was once scouted and scorned. A man had to give up something. He exposed himself to persecution. He risked the loss of his worldly goods, and perhaps of his very life. But now all is easy, as far as mere nominal Christianity is concerned. To be a *nominal* Christian however, and to be a *real* Christian, are two very different things. You remember what St. Paul said of the Jew—" He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh ; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter ; whose praise is not of men, but of God." Just change two words in this text, and how does

it run? "He is not a *Christian* who is one outwardly, neither is that *Baptism*, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a *Christian* who is one inwardly," &c.

It is certainly a great privilege to be numbered among Christ's people. But no amount of privileges will make any one a true Christian. It is not *profession* that will make him one; but it is the *possession* of God's grace in the heart, filling him with love to the Saviour, and making him willing to be His real servant.

We will take yet another reason. Very likely it will be this—"I am a *Christian*, because I wish to have something to fall back upon, when death approaches."

However carelessly people may *live*, there are very few who like the thoughts of *dying* altogether without religion. It is a fearful thing to leave this world, and launch out into eternity, like one putting to sea in the dark, or with a boat that he cannot thoroughly trust. It is a fearful thing not to know where we are going, and to have nothing to rely upon at such a tremendous hour. Ah, there are many

who care not to live a Christian's life, but they desire to die a Christian's death. And therefore, with all their worldliness, they are unwilling entirely to give up religion, hoping that it may serve them a good turn, when the world can no longer do anything for them. They look upon it as a sort of bridge, over which they may pass into the other world with some show at least of safety.

Do you not feel that these would be but poor, sorry answers to the inquiry, "*Why am I a Christian?*" This is not what the Apostle meant, when he said, "Be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

But I do trust that *you* can find better reasons than these for being a Christian. I trust that *you* are ready from your heart to say, "I am a Christian, because I find in the gospel of Jesus Christ the only true revelation from God to man. There I am told what I am—a sinner; and what Jesus offers to be—my Saviour. Here is the only sure rock on which I can safely build my hopes. And more than this,

I not only read in the Bible that I am a sinner ; but I feel that I am one, and my conscience bears witness to it. My sins are many ; but the blood of Christ can wash them all out, even to the very deepest stain."

Then you know the value of being a Christian. You know what it is to look up in faith to Him who taketh away the sin of the world, and to feel the joy of pardon and acceptance. And you are ready to exclaim, "I thank God that I was born of Christian Parents, and moreover that I am now a Christian from choice and conviction."

Again, you will say perhaps, "I want to get to heaven. Something within tells me that I may not be long here ; and when I die to this world, I wish to live for ever in the next. I know no way of reaching that heavenly world, but through Christ. He is the only one who has ever said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life : no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.' *Therefore* I am a Christian. All my hopes are centred in the cross. My life is hid with Christ in God : and when Christ who is my life shall appear,

I shall appear with Him in glory. My little course here will soon be run; but I look for a better dwelling-place, a more lasting home, above. Then I shall behold Him whom I love, and shall dwell with Him for ever."

Once more. Are there not some who can say from their hearts, I have put the religion of the gospel to the test, and I find it able to support me under every circumstance of life. *Therefore* I thank God that I am a Christian.

If you have prayed earnestly, and God has answered your prayer—if you have gone to your heavenly Father in the hour of trial, and have found comfort and relief—if your heart has ached on account of sin, and you have laid that sin down before the cross, and have experienced the Saviour's pardoning love, and have learnt what true peace is—then can you not put your hand on the gospel, and say, "Here is the charter of all my privileges. Here is the foundation on which I build my hopes for time and for eternity. Let others feel coldly about Christianity: to me it is everything. I would give up my worldly

gains, my worldly prospects, and my worldly engagements—I would cast them all to the winds—for Christ's sake. For this one thing, more than for any other, I thank God, namely that I am a Christian; that unworthy in myself, I have found a Saviour; that undeserving as I am, through grace I have obtained mercy."

Surely he who has tasted, who has felt, and who knows, the love of God to his own soul, has no difficulty in replying to the question before us.

And now, before you read any further in this Book, think over what has been said, and put home to yourself the important inquiry, "*Why am I a Christian?*" Can I give a really good reason? Have I laid hold of Christ? Is He mine? Have I got below the surface, and found the treasure? Is religion a reality with me?

Oh how little will the name of Christian do for us. And yet how many have nothing more than the name. But we want the substance, the thing itself. We must possess Christ. We must have Him in our hearts, if we would be

saved by Him. There is a battle to be fought with sin. There is a victory to be gained. There is a kingdom to be won.

In the great day which is soon coming, it will be nothing to be able to say, "I am learned," or "I am rich." It will be nothing to be able to say, "I attended my church ; I went to the Lord's Table ; I read my Bible ; I said my Prayers." Are you a Christian ? will be the great question then—a holy, loving, believing Christian ? And there is one Eye that will search you through and through, and strip off every covering.

Happy for us, if we shall then be able to say, "Thank God, I am a Christian—by nature a sinner, but by grace a Christian" !

In the next Chapter I want you to examine with me another question, not perhaps of such vital importance as the one which we have now been considering, but still a very important one—"Why am I a *Church of England* Christian ?"

CHAPTER II.

WHY AM I A CHURCH OF ENGLAND
CHRISTIAN ?

HAVING, in the last Chapter, considered that most important question, *Why am I a Christian?* we now come to the other question I spoke of, namely, “*Why am I a Church of England Christian?*”

There are thousands of Church people who never consider *why* they are members of the Church of England. They have been brought up in that Fold, and they have a sort of love for the kind of worship to which they have all along been accustomed.

But ought this reason to satisfy us? Are there not better and stronger reasons why we should love our Church, and cling to it as something that we really value?

Let me then put myself in the place of any

plain, simple person, and ask myself, "Why am I a *Churchman*?"

1. My first and foremost reason is, that *I believe my Church to be formed after the Scripture model.*

Our blessed Lord, before He left this world, gave certain directions as regards the Framework of His Church. These directions however were not many: a few only have been handed down to us in the New Testament.

It seems to have been the will of Christ that for a while His Church should be watched over by *the Apostles*. But after a few years these Apostles all died and passed away. And then *Bishops* were appointed, who were to take the place of the Apostles, were to act as overseers of the whole Christian body, and were to ordain men as ministers in the Church.

We read in Scripture of some of these early Bishops; and we gather from the Acts, and from the Epistles, that St. James was appointed the first Bishop of Jerusalem; that Timothy was made Bishop of Ephesus; and that Titus was Bishop of Crete.

Hence we find St. Paul writing an Epistle, or Letter, to Titus, in which he says, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things which are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed them." And indeed St. Paul speaks of himself as "having the care of all the churches;" just as a Bishop has in his diocese in the present day.

Such then was the practice in the earliest time. Our Lord had His Church, with Apostles and Bishops to watch over it. And our own Church follows exactly the same rule. She has *Ministers* in every parish to teach the people, and to administer Christ's sacraments ; and she has also *Bishops* placed over them to superintend and direct them. This is a wise arrangement ; and what is more, it is a scriptural one.

2. My next reason is, that *I believe the doctrines of my Church to be sound.*

I have shown you that her *Framework* is strictly in accordance with the ancient and scriptural model. But although this is the case, still if her *Teaching* also be not scriptural and

true, we cannot be safe in her fold. But let us see ; and I think the closer we look into this important matter, the more we shall be satisfied that our Church teaches sound and wholesome doctrine, "the truth as it is in Jesus."

Now observe, she holds fast to the *Three Ancient Creeds* ; namely, the Apostles' Creed, which was drawn up in the earliest ages ; the Nicene Creed, which was agreed to about two hundred years after ; and the Athanasian Creed, about a hundred years later still.

Here are three ancient Landmarks, which are of great value, and which keep us from going very far away from the truth. For the closer we follow the steps of the early Christians the safer will be our course ; the nearer we get to the Springhead, the purer will be the water.

Then we have a further Safeguard in our *Thirty-Nine Articles*, which were drawn up about three hundred years ago ; and also in our *Liturgy*, which has existed for a great length of time.

But after all, our Church clings to *Holy Scripture* as the great foundation of her faith.

She sets forth nothing to be believed by her members but what is contained in the word of God, or is agreeable to the same. She is very decided on this point. "Holy Scripture (she says in her Sixth Article) containeth all things necessary to salvation. So that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought necessary to salvation."

Then in all our *Public Services*, as well as in the Articles, how clearly the great and leading doctrines of the gospel are brought out; such as the Fall of man, his Redemption through Christ alone, the Sacrifice of the Son of God for the sins of the world, the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, the Godhead of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, the need of good works and of a holy life, the certainty of a judgment to come. All these doctrines are plainly and broadly held by the Church to which we belong. Truly it may be said of her in this respect, that she is "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone."

And is it a small blessing to have so sound and faithful a Guide? Instead of being "tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine," we have something solid and substantial to fall back upon. We are founded upon a rock, which never shifts nor wavers. It is possible that ministers may sometimes be unfaithful, or their teaching faulty; but the Church, whose servants they are, is still faithful, and her doctrines sound.

You see then that our Church is framed after the Scripture model; and that she is also clear as to the great truths which she sets before us.

3. But a third reason weighs with me—*The Church of England is no new Church*, but has existed from the earliest times.

Some things are none the better for being ancient. The Clothes we wear are stronger and more comely for being new. The House we live in is all the more solid and air-tight if it has been recently built. The Bread we eat is all the sweeter and more nutritious, if it has not laid long in our cupboards. All

these things are better for being new. But it is not so with many other things.

If, for instance, we wanted a Counsellor, we should not consult a mere youngster. We should rather choose a person whose years have given him some experience. If a difficult and perilous attack were to be made on some Fort, the General would select for the enterprise a band of Veterans, rather than a body of Young Recruits who had just been enlisted.

And ought it not to be so in a tenfold degree, when we are deciding upon a Church, to which we may attach ourselves; a Church, which is to be our guide during our life-time; a Church, which is to mould and form us for eternity; a Church, which is to be our preparation-school for heaven? Is it not most important that she should be no new Church, but one that has existed for centuries?

Such is the Church of England. It dates back its birth to the very earliest times. Some think that St. Paul himself visited this country, and planted the Church here. It is clear that the Christian Church was established

in England, if not in the days of the Apostles, certainly not long after ; and here it has existed ever since.

For many years the English Church was under the dominion of the Bishop of Rome. And first one error, and then another, were forced upon her, until the truth of God almost vanished. During this dark and unhappy period, many sighed for a purer light. Many of her members longed to see her free herself from the shackles that bound her. And at length, about Three hundred years ago, a few bold champions were raised up by God to protest against the errors which they saw around them, and to restore His truth.

Then it was that the Church of England was reformed ; and error, wherever it was seen to exist, was cast out. The Public Services, which had been in Latin, were now used in English. The Bible, which had long been almost a sealed Book, was now translated, and was read freely in all our churches. And the false doctrines and practices, which had gradually crept in, were at once given up.

This was what is called *the Reformation*. Do not for a moment suppose that the Church

of England then had her beginning. She did not then spring up for the first time, as if she had never existed before. She was not *first* formed at that time ; she was only *reformed*, and purified from the idolatry, defilements, and superstitions of Popery.

This Reformation was indeed a glorious work. If anything wrong was mixed with it, to us belongs the shame ; but for all that was right we may indeed bless God.

You will bear in mind then that after the Reformation the Church continued to be the same Church as she was before it ; only purified from error in doctrine, and freed from the dominion of Rome.

Just as a careful Gardener, who discovers that his Tree is cankered and decaying, lops off every unsound part, and preserves the rest ; so did our Reformers. They did not root up the whole Tree ; but they purged it and cleansed it ; and it has grown, and prospered, and borne fruit, ever since.

Or we may compare our reformed Church to a Person recovered from a dangerous illness. He is precisely the same man that he was before ; but a new strength has been given

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We have reason to be thankful that at the time of the Reformation our Church steered a very wise course. God seems graciously to have kept her in a middle track, whilst others wandered to the right and left. Because the Bishops had become unfaithful to their holy calling, many Christian Bodies rejected their government altogether, and gave up Episcopacy. Because written Prayers were offered in a cold and formal manner, they abolished the use of a Liturgy. But the Church of England refused to part with these things, because they were in themselves right. Whilst she cast aside all that was clearly wrong, she retained all that was sound and good. The moss that had gathered round her stem was peeled off; but every branch, and every twig, that was sound was most carefully preserved. The dross was put away; but every morsel of precious metal was scrupulously preserved.

May we not say then, "I love my Church, because she is old. Her hoary head is a

crown of glory"? "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

4. Again, any plain and simple man may well say, "*I love my Church, because she has provided just such Prayers as we need for Public Worship.*"

Our Service Book furnishes us with plain Prayers, such as all can understand. It seems too as if all our wants are met in these Prayers. Our Queen is mentioned, our Rulers, the poor Widow, the little Children, all the Sick and Suffering; and even the Absent and the Traveller are not forgotten. Then there is a word of intercession for the Tempted and Tried, for those who are Prospering, and those who are in Trouble. We acknowledge our sins, and ask for pardon. We pray for new hearts, for the gift of the Spirit, for peace here and happiness hereafter.

In short, if we have only hearts to pray, here are Prayers just suited to our need; so

devout, so spiritual, and so scriptural, that many who do not worship with us have acknowledged that no Prayers can equal ours.

But while our Church provides us with this beautiful Form of Prayer for Public Worship, she does not require us to use it on all other occasions. In our Private Devotions, or in our Social Gatherings, she leaves it to our own discretion to use any Prayers which may best suit us.

5. I will state one more reason, before I close this chapter—*Our Church gives special honour to the Bible*; and on that account we may well love her.

There is an immense mass of Scripture interwoven with our Church Services; and a large portion of the Bible is read out to the Congregation. Go into any other Place of Worship, and you will not get nearly so much food from God's word as you do in our churches. Here you are certain to have in each Service two whole Chapters for the Lessons; two or three entire Psalms; besides a portion for the Epistle and Gospel. Then, may we not say

that our Church specially honours God's word, and that He will honour her for doing so ?

And now think over what has been said. Think of the *Five Points* on which I have dwelt. Thus I hope you will be the better able to give an answer to those, who may endeavour to draw you away from your steadfastness. Remember that our answer should always be given, as St. Peter says, "with meekness and fear;" with that Christian *meekness* and gentleness which becomes God's people, and with that *fear* or reverence which so important a subject demands.

Those among whom we are thrown may differ from us ; they may not see things as we see them ; but never let us be tempted either to feel harshly towards them, or to speak harshly of them. Rather let us speak lovingly, kindly, meekly, reverently. And in this way we shall be far more likely to persuade them, and win them over to our side, than if we indulged in sharp and irritating words, or showed an overbearing temper. Hard words will only wound : they will never convince.

It is a happy thing to be fully persuaded in one's own mind; to have our footing firm; to feel that we are right, and that nothing therefore can move us from our strong position. It is a happy thing to be Churchmen from choice, Churchmen from conviction, men and women who cling to the Church, because we know its value—who love it, as the Friend who helps us on our way, as the Mother who so carefully provides for our spiritual wants.

May our Church be more and more dear to us! May we be drawn more and more together, as members one of another! And above all, may we look more and more to Christ as our great and living Head! And especially may we love as brethren those who really belong to His family and household!

CHAPTER III.

FURTHER REASONS FOR BEING A
CHURCHMAN.

I WISH in this Chapter to give you some additional answers to the question, "Why am I a *Churchman*?"

I have already given you these Five—

1st. Because the Church of England is in the main framed after the pattern of the early Christian Church, and according to the scripture model.

2dly. Because her doctrines and teaching are sound.

3dly. Because she is no newly formed Church.

4thly. Because she provides us with a Liturgy, a Form of Prayer for Public Worship, exactly suited to our wants.

5thly. Because she honours God's Word,

by introducing large portions of it into her Services.

And now there are some further reasons which I should like to mention. For instance,

6. I set a high value on my Church, because *she makes a firm stand against error*. And why can this be said more truly of the Church of England than of other Churches? Because there are laid down in her Articles and in her Prayer Book, such clear and sound statements of God's truth, that she does indeed serve as a noble bulwark against Romish corruptions, and other errors.

No Church can be kept entirely free from false teachers, and unsound teaching. Our own Church has found them at times within her fold. But, as a Church, she not only "declares all the counsel of God," and that clearly and unmistakeably, but she has set up certain Landmarks of truth, which cannot easily be overstepped.

Hence it is that among her Ministers there have been, and ever will be, found many bold and successful champions of God's truth.

And the strongest and ablest writers against false doctrines, which this country has produced, are for the most part Churchmen.

7. *Again, the Church of England provides a fixed Ministry to watch over each Parish throughout the land.*

Surely it is no small blessing to have one, whom each Parishioner can look upon as his spiritual guide, to advise him in every difficulty, to comfort him under every trial, to kneel by his bedside when sick, and point out to him the way to heaven. And these Ministers are duly trained, and then ordained after the manner of the Apostles.

8. *The Church system too provides for her members in every stage and condition of life.*

In our infancy it brings us to Christ, and puts us under His sheltering care. This it does in the Holy ordinance of Baptism. Then, when we are old enough to think for ourselves, it calls upon us at Confirmation openly to range ourselves on the Lord's side. If a married life be our portion, it unites us together by the most sacred bond. It thinks of

us in Sickness. It stands by us in the hour of Death, and cares for our precious souls. And when life has departed from our body, it commits our remains with a most impressive ceremony to their last resting-place.

Thus, like a tender Nurse, or a loving Mother, our Church carefully watches over her children from their first entrance into the world to their final departure from it.

9. A further reason why we may well prize our Church is that *she has nurtured so many holy men among her members.*

Many of them have shone as bright lights in this dark world. They have led holy lives, and died happy deaths. Some of these have suffered as martyrs for their Lord's sake. We are thankful to be able to say that many of the most eminent saints, which this country has produced, have been either members or ministers of the Church.

Alas, I know that there are some among us, who are a disgrace and a scandal to the Body of which they are professed members. So it ever will be in every Christian society. But I believe that there are in our communion

more really devoted and consistent persons than perhaps in any other. There is something in our system which promotes genuine piety, something which keeps us humble, and makes us more ready to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour by our *lives* than by our *words*. I believe that God has many true servants in other Christian Bodies. But still I have often remarked that, when a person leaves our Church, his spirit is nearly sure to suffer by the step. He is apt to become high-minded, more careful about doctrine than about practice, more ready to talk about the gospel, than to live by gospel rule. And again, we often find such persons disposed to speak uncharitably of others, and more anxious to gain men over to their own party, than to win them to Christ.

It is not always so, I know. I thank God, there are many bright exceptions. But my own experience tells me that it too often is the case; and I feel very thankful that our system has a tendency rather to keep us down, than to raise us up too high.

10. Another very strong reason why I

would cling to my Church is because *I love unity, and I feel that my Saviour loves it.*

Now, it is clear that there is no unity in Dissent. One body of Christians holds Infant Baptism : another rejects it. One body is Calvinistic : another is just the reverse. But in the Church of England there is a widespread bond, which binds all together, and a safe rallying-point, around which we may all gather.

I believe that one great sin of the present day is want of unity—division among Christians. When we look at our parishes, and see men divided on that one point, on which they ought to agree ; when we see them on the Lord's-day, instead of gathering together in the same House of Prayer, and approaching their heavenly Father with one heart and one voice, divided off into parties, and looking coldly on one another ; this cannot be right. It ought not to be so. It is a hindrance to religion. It is a stumblingblock to our weaker brethren. And what is worse, it is an offence to God. For what does His own word say on this subject ?

“Mark them which cause *divisions* and

offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learnt, and avoid them; for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ.” “The time will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they *heap to themselves teachers*, having itching ears.” Again, St. Paul speaks of there being “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” He declares that there should be “*no schism* (or division) *in the body*.” And he exhorts us to “keep the *unity* of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” And writing to the Christians at Corinth, he says, “I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be *no divisions among you*, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.” And you remember no doubt those remarkable words, which our Lord Himself uttered just before His crucifixion. We have them in John xvii; which we find Him thus interceding for His own beloved church and people, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that *they all may be one*; as thou, Father, art in me,

and I in thee, that they also may be one in us ; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

I do not say that every one who dissents from the Church of England must needs be guilty of the grave offence of schism. Some have been driven to it by the Church's neglect in past years. Some again have been brought up as Dissenters from their childhood. And others, through ignorance of the Church's claims and the Church's teaching, have been led to join what they really imagined to be a purer communion. But those who have *lightly and without cause* separated from a Church which is both sound and scriptural, either because it suited their convenience, or because they took offence at something said or done by their clergyman, have indeed been guilty of that sin, and have thereby incurred God's displeasure.

Oh how much have those to answer for, who rend and divide the body of Christ's people ! A branch cannot be torn away from its parent stem without suffering from it. And it is a fearful thing to cut one's self off from our Mother Church. God forgive those

32 FURTHER REASONS FOR BEING A CHURCHMAN.

who have done so ! May it be our endeavour to promote that unity which is so dear to our Lord Himself ! For surely if the world saw us united, instead of separated, praying together, and drawing the cord tighter which binds us to one another, it would believe that God was among us of a truth.

Hasten, O Lord, the time when thy little flock shall feed together in the same pasture, when Ephraim shall no more envy Judah, and Judah shall not envy Ephraim, when there shall be one fold under one Shepherd.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BELONGING TO A
TRUE CHURCH.

I HAVE now given you Ten reasons, and I hope good reasons, why we should love our Church. Truly she is a faithful guide to us on our heavenly journey, and there is safety in belonging to her.

I have sometimes heard it said that *it matters little to what Body of Christians we attach ourselves—that it does not signify to what earthly Church we belong—so that we get to heaven at last.* But it *does* matter a great deal.

It is true, that when a Building is erected, the scaffolding is no longer needed. When a grain of Wheat is ready for the garner, the husk may be thrown away; or when a Nut is fully ripe, its shell is of no further use. But

would it not be unwise to undo the scaffold-poles whilst the house is being built, or to cast away the husk before the harvest time, or to strip off the shell before the kernel within is fully ripe?

Even so it is with regard to the outward Church. As the Scaffolding is important, whilst the stones and the timber are being put into their places; and the Husk and the Shell are not only valuable, but even necessary, in the formation of the grain and of the kernel which they contain; so we should value the outward Church during the time when our souls are being built up and formed for eternity—as long as the ripening process for heaven is going on. It has a very important purpose to serve. And then, when the present state of things comes to an end, the outward help, and outward covering as it were, will be laid aside, and the life within will alone remain. It must therefore be of the greatest importance where we cast in our lot, whether in a sound, or unsound, Church.

Suppose we were called upon to make a perilous descent down one of the cliffs of Dover, and our chance of safety consisted in

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attaching a rope to some post at the top. Would it not be of immense importance to select a strong Rope and a sound Post? No effort of our own would make us secure, if the support on which we depended proved worthless.

Or, to take another case, suppose we wished to make a long voyage; and we were to go to one of our Seaports, in order to secure our passage in some trustworthy Ship. We might see perhaps in the harbour three or four, all bound for the same port. But if one was pointed out to us that had already made the voyage, and had conveyed in safety thousands of passengers—one that had weathered many a storm, and had shown itself thoroughly seaworthy—should we not at once say, "This is the Ship for me? It is true, there may be others of a newer and more attractive appearance; but to this vessel I will trust myself with the fullest confidence."

And so we may trust with confidence to our Church. Of course she cannot *save* us: Christ alone can do that. But she is a sound Rope, by which we may hold on to Him amidst the perils of the world. She is a

Vessel of safety, in which we may embark with perfect confidence on the voyage of life. She has borne others safely to "the haven where they would be"; and safely too will she bear us, if we are faithful to her, and trust to her guidance.

You will observe perhaps that I have spoken somewhat strongly about my Church. I will not conceal that I love her from my very heart. But I trust that I have not written one unkind word concerning those who differ from us.

And why have I said so much about attachment to our Church? Because I know there are thousands who belong to her, and who yet are unable to give any good reasons for their membership. And again, because many who have separated themselves from her Communion have done so through ignorance of what she really is: they are not aware of her excellencies; they have never looked into her teaching; but have run away with very wrong notions.

But I would have you bear *this* in mind—The Church we belong to may be pure, and sound, and true; she may be a safe Guide to

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us, and a watchful Guardian over us ; we may delight in her Services, partake of all her Ordinances, revere her Ministers, and take a lively interest in all that concerns her ; and yet be found unsaved at last. We may be devoted members of the visible Church on earth, and yet have no part in "the general assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in heaven."

Salvation is in Christ ; out of Him we are unsaved. We must find our pardon, our acceptance, our peace in Him. He must be the rock on which we are built. We must hide ourselves in His riven side. We must be washed in His atoning blood. We must live upon Him by faith, from day to day, and from hour to hour.

If this Book should fall into the hands of a thoughtful and earnest Dissenter, I would say to him, "My Christian brother, I wish to make you a Churchman, not because I want to add to our number, and swell our ranks, but because from my heart I believe that it will be better and happier for you. By returning to the Church of your fathers you will be

taking a step well pleasing to God ; you will be closing up one of the rents which have been made in the Christian Body ; you will find a safe resting-place and home for your soul."

And you who are Churchmen like myself, I wish *you* to have a firmer hold of your Church ; for I know that it will greatly help you. It is very desirable to feel that you have solid grounds for your Church membership, good reasons for clinging close to her, and for loving her as your Mother and your Guide.

Yes, I want to see you hearty in your attachment to your own Communion ; earnestly seeking her welfare ; taking a deep interest in the work she is doing ; and feeling that every member of her body is in one sense your Brother or Sister in Christ.

It is not merely the Clergy who should be earnest in the Church's cause ; the People should be earnest too, even the very humblest of them. Our constant inquiry should be, Is there any way in which we can serve her ? Can we do anything to promote her interests ? Then let us do it with all our hearts. Let us be more faithful to our Church. Let us not

be ashamed to stand up for her, when spoken against. Let us speak of her as those who feel heartily thankful that they belong to such a Fold. Other Christians are not ashamed of their Creeds : why should we be less zealous than they ?

We do not claim complete perfection for our Church. She may have many faults ; and so has everything in which man is concerned. But has she not been, and is she not still, a vast blessing to the World, and especially to this Country ? She has given us a well-translated Bible, and a scriptural Liturgy. She has been honoured by a noble army of martyrs, and a glorious company of devoted servants of Christ. May her boundaries be enlarged, and her usefulness extended ; and may thousands have reason to call her walls Salvation, and her gates Praise !

Look upon your Church then as a nursery for heaven. Be not only anxious to see many flocking into it ; but be still more anxious that those who are already in it should be men and women whose hearts are given to God, and whose treasure and home are above. What we want is that our members should be faith-

ful and true of heart—men and women who are walking with God here, and are growing meet for his presence hereafter—who love the Church in which they have found peace and rest, the Home in which they are tarrying for a while, the Ship as it were which is bearing them on their way; but whose eyes are steadily fixed on that better Land, to which every wave is bringing them nearer.

And O happy thought! our good and gracious Shepherd has not only provided *a Fold on earth* for His sheep, in which their present wants and their present safety are provided for. But He has made ready for them *a Fold above*, in which they will be perfectly safe, and perfectly happy, through all eternity.

In that Fold there will be nothing imperfect, nothing wanting. Into that Fold no sin will ever enter, no wolves will alarm, no mixture of chaff will spoil the wheat. From that Fold there will be no departure, no going out any more. Within that Fold we shall serve God day and night in His temple.

That is the Church which St. Paul describes as the glorious Church, not having spot, or

wrinkle, or any such thing; but holy, and without blemish." And again he speaks of it as "the heavenly Jerusalem, the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven."

God give to you and me, dear Reader, a portion and a place in that heavenly Church!

CHAPTER V.

OUR FORM OF WORSHIP—IS IT AN
ADVANTAGE OR A DISADVANTAGE?

It is surely very desirable that we, who belong to the Church of England, should be fully acquainted with those Public Services, in which we are in the constant habit of engaging. And if we can add life and warmth to those Services, and make them more the offering of our hearts, will it not be a great blessing to each one of us? Oh that we may ever be true worshippers in the sight of God!

Let us dwell for a moment on *Public Worship generally*.

I would not for a moment undervalue the importance of *Private Prayer*. We shall all feel the blessedness of it, if there is any life in

our souls. For what is Prayer? It is the Stepping-Stone to heaven. It is the Wind by which we soar upwards. It is the Bow which we draw with the hand of faith, and which carries our message to God. It is the Pitcher with which we go to the never-failing Fountain. It is as needful for our souls, as eating and drinking is for our bodies.

Yes, *Private* Prayer is very important; and indeed our souls cannot live without it. Still it is not the only kind of Prayer we ought to use. God has always encouraged His people to meet together for *Public* Worship also, to pray with one another, and to join together every now and then, to tell out their many wants to Him who is more ready to give than we are to ask. Just as the separate members of a Family do several things alone and apart from the rest, but at stated times they meet for the family meal; so we, as members of a great Christian Family, though we have each of us our private prayers, and private reading of Scripture, yet on certain fixed occasions we meet together to offer up our united supplications to the great Father of us all.

The Jews in former times had the Temple, where numbers of them used to congregate for Prayer. They had also, in every town, smaller places called Synagogues, where they assembled for Public Worship. And Christians too in every land have their Houses of God, which are consecrated and set apart for purposes of devotion.

There is a special sacredness about these Buildings, because there we bend our knees and speak with God. And has He not promised, "In all places where I record my name (that is, in every place which I stamp with my holy presence) I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee"; and again, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"?

What! do we indeed meet our Lord in the Sanctuary? Is He in the very midst of us? And shall we come into His presence with careless hearts, as we would go into any common house? When we enter within those walls, He seems to say to us, as He said to Moses, when he approached the burning bush, "Take off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy

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ground." He seems to say, "Draw near with reverence and godly fear."

Let us then always remember, when we enter a church, that it is God's holy house; and that He Himself is present among us, though we see Him not. And let us feel especial awe and reverence when we are within His Courts.

But I now come to another point, and that a very important one to us who belong to the Church of England. We are in the habit of using *a Form of Prayer*. Now, is this an advantage, or a disadvantage? I think it is a great advantage; and I will tell you why.

One advantage is that we all thus *know beforehand what we are going to ask for*, and we can therefore enter the more heartily into the Prayers that are offered. If I was praying *alone*, it would be very different. I should have my own particular wants; and I should perhaps find it best to use my own words, just as those wants press upon me. Or again, if I knelt down to pray with a sick person, there would most likely be something special about his case, and I should pray accordingly.

But when a Congregation prays in public, and when the Minister has to suit his petitions to the general wants of *all*, then I know of no plan so good as that which we are in the habit of adopting. We need not be always thinking what will come next, or how the Clergyman will finish his prayer, or whether he prays well or ill. All we have to do is to throw our whole souls into the Prayer before us, and pray it with our very hearts.

Another advantage in our particular Form of Worship is that *the Congregation can take their part, as well as the Minister*. There are some Prayers, which they are invited to repeat along with him, such as the Confession, and the Lord's Prayer. And there are also certain portions of the service, which the people repeat alone, making regular responses or answers, whilst he is altogether silent.

How delightful it would be, if the many voices of our congregations could really be brought to unite together in one loud strain of prayer and praise. I feel sure that if this were done, our services would be much more interesting, much more life-like, and much

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more real, than at present. Then indeed a stranger, coming into our congregations, might report that God was with us of a truth; and he would see that we really believe what we are saying. Both Minister and People would all feel the good of it; for is it not the case, that the earnestness of *both* is increased or diminished by the spirit of those who are around them?

Our Church Service need not be dull; for it is not only "a reasonable service," but it may also be an earnest, living service.

One great beauty then in our Worship is that the Congregation take *their part* in the Prayers. This is a most striking feature in it, which only those can enjoy who use a regular Form.

A further advantage is that we may enjoy the delightful feeling that, whilst we are engaged in prayer, *numbers of other Church Congregations are offering up the very same petitions to the Throne of Grace that we offer.* This gives a oneness to our Church system, and links us together by a chain that cannot easily be broken. The thought too is very

sweet, that our Relations and Acquaintances who are far away, Parents whom we honour, Brethren whom we love, Friends whom we esteem, are perhaps at the very moment uttering the same Prayers, offering up the same Praises, before our Father's throne *in the very same words that we are using*—their hearts soaring upwards on the same wings that bear up ours to heaven.

Thus do we invite our Lord to fulfil to us His own promise, "If any two of you shall *agree* on earth, as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."

Once more—A Form of Prayer is a great means of *preventing our minds from wandering*. Who does not feel that his thoughts are very apt to rove in the House of God? But I am sure that nothing checks this so much as having a Prayer Book before us. It will not, I know, stop the evil altogether; but the danger becomes much less; for wandering *eyes* often lead to wandering *thoughts*.

If you suffer from this temptation, remember that much care is needed in order to over-

come it. Try and fix your mind steadily on the Prayer that is being offered; and at the same time let your eye follow it in your Prayer Book. This will, I think, greatly help you.

I have said enough, I trust, to show the advantage of a regular Form. Other Bodies of Christians may use extemporary prayer. We do not find fault with them for so doing; but we believe that ours is "the more excellent way."

Sometimes perhaps you may hear foolish and unchristian remarks about our Church Prayers. You will hear it said perhaps that God cares not for Prayers *out of a book*; and that what He does care for is Prayer *out of the heart*. This sounds very true. But do extemporary prayers always come from the heart? I fear not. Again, because we use a Form, need our Prayers be *formal*? Are not as hearty, earnest, living supplications, put up in our assemblies, as in other Christian gatherings? There is alas far too much coldness and deadness in our worship; but the

defect is not in the Service, but in our way of using it.

After all, it may be asked, What does the Bible say on this subject? Does Holy Scripture give us any direction as to written or unwritten prayer? If it did, that would at once settle the question. But the word of God is silent on this point. It is true, there are Forms of Prayer mentioned in Scripture which were used by the Jews, and also by Christians. But there is no direction or command given us one way or the other. It is one of those things which God has seen fit to leave to our own choice, and we must therefore judge for ourselves.

And now a very few words about *the Book* we use.

It is called "the Book of Common Prayer;" for the word *common* sometimes means *united* or *joint*. We have many Books of *Private* Prayer, but this is our Book of *Joint* or *Common* Prayer, which we use when we come together in God's House.

Most of the Prayers in it are very old, and were composed by good and holy men who

loved Christ, and who, many of them, laid down their lives for His sake. And we have the comfort of feeling that the same Prayers, which we offer up now, were addressed to God years and years ago by other worshippers ; and were not offered in vain.

The more you examine these Prayers, the more you will see how truly scriptural they are. They breathe the spirit of God's own word ; and some of them are in the actual language of the Bible. It is a fact, that many who differ from us are ready to acknowledge, that no prayers were ever written which are more beautiful and more scriptural. And I believe there are Dissenters at the present time who are longing to adopt them.

St. Paul, in his Epistle to Timothy, says, "Hold fast the form of sound words." What that "Form" was we are not told. It was either some Form of Prayer, or some Creed, which had been drawn up by the early Christians, and which they looked upon as a document of some importance. And St. Paul bids Timothy to prize it, and hold it fast. We Christians of the present day have indeed "a form of sound words" in our

Prayer Book, which we shall do well to "hold fast," as a precious treasure that has been handed down to us—a treasure which the more closely we look into, the more we shall value.

I have now spoken in a general way about our Prayer Book and our Services. I shall in the remainder of this book call your attention to, and explain, the different parts of our Morning and Evening Prayer.

PART THE SECOND.

EXPLANATION OF THE MORNING AND EVENING SERVICE.

CHAPTER I.

THE OPENING SENTENCES—THE EXHORTATION—THE CONFESSION—THE ABSOLUTION—THE LORD'S PRAYER.

I HAVE already spoken to you about Public Worship generally, also about our particular Form of Prayer, and of the advantage we gain by using this Form. I am now going to speak more particularly about *our Morning and Evening Services*.

Our Morning Service consists of Three Services joined together. The Morning Prayer, without the Litany, was intended to be used

in the early morning. Then the Litany Service was to come a little later ; and the Communion Service later still. The Three are now generally used as one Service. And this will account for our having Two Creeds, and for repeating the Lord's Prayer two or three times over.

We will now proceed to examine our Morning and Evening Services.

The Congregation being assembled, and each one having privately asked God to dispose his heart truly to worship Him, the Clergyman begins the Service with one or more of

THE OPENING SENTENCES.

The reading of these is evidently intended to prepare our minds for the Prayers which follow. You will observe that each Sentence is a Text of Scripture, and that they all refer to what we should feel when we draw near to God—namely, our own sinfulness. Just cast your eye upon each.

The *First* is an assurance that, sinners as we are, there is mercy for us, if we truly

repent ; “ When the wicked man turneth away,” &c.

The *Second* is a simple confession of sin ; “ I acknowledge my sin,” &c.

The *Third* is a prayer that God would “ hide His face from our sins, and blot out all our iniquities.”

The *Fourth* reminds us of the spirit in which we should come before God, namely, with a contrite and broken heart ; “ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,” &c.

The *Fifth* is a caution against mere formality, and a gracious assurance that God is ready to show mercy ; “ Rend your heart and not your garments,” &c. It used to be the custom to rend or tear the garments, as a sign of grief. But *we* are called upon rather to rend our *hearts*.

The *Sixth* expresses a humble trust that God will accept us, though we have offended Him ; “ To the Lord our God belongeth mercy,” &c.

The *Seventh* is a prayer that God would correct what is wrong in us ; but that in doing so He would remember mercy ; “ O Lord, correct me ; but with judgment,” &c.

The *Eighth* contains the gospel call to repentance ; " Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The *Ninth* is the heartfelt confession of the Prodigal, returning to his Father ; " I will arise and go to my Father," &c.

The *Tenth* is the language of a person asking God not to pass sentence on him, though he richly deserves to be condemned ; " Enter not into judgment," &c.

The *Last* is an acknowledgment of our guilt, coupled with the promise that God will grant forgiveness to those who seek it. It reminds us that to confess our sins is the first step to pardon ; " If we say that we have no sin," &c.

Having read then one or more of these short and striking passages of Scripture, the Minister next delivers

THE GENERAL EXHORTATION,

which is addressed to those who are gathered before him.

He speaks to them as his " Dearly beloved Brethren " ; for remember, all—young and old, rich and poor—all are Brethren before

God. The spirit of brotherhood is the spirit we should feel, when we come together in God's house. Try and get this spirit into your mind ; for it will warm your heart, and help you in your devotions.

You will remember that this is not a *Prayer*, but an *Exhortation*. It is simply an Address from the Minister to the assembled Congregation, and therefore they listen to it *standing up*.

He begins by reminding them that God's word "in sundry places" (that is, many different passages) calls upon them to acknowledge and confess their sins, without attempting to dissemble or cloke them before God. No, we cannot hide them, and it is folly to attempt it ; for God looks down into the very depths of our hearts, and knows all.

Then he also reminds them that such a confession is never out of place ; "We ought *at all times* humbly to acknowledge our sins before God." But this is *especially* suitable at the time of Public Worship ; "We ought most chiefly so to do, *when we assemble and meet together.*"

And this leads him to mention the other

purposes for which we are assembled ; namely for *Thanksgiving*, which we have in various parts of the Service, but especially in the General Thanksgiving Prayer ; also for *Praise*, which we have in the Psalms, and Hymns, and Doxologies ; again for *Reading and Hearing the word of God*, which we have in the Psalms, Lessons, Epistle and Gospel, and also in the Sermon ; and lastly for *Prayer* generally—"To ask those things which are requisite and necessary as well for the body as for the soul."

He then invites them to join him in drawing near to the Throne of Grace "with a pure heart and humble voice."

And now we come to the *First Prayer*. And truly this is of all the Prayers one of the most beautiful, and the most suitable to a company of sinful men and women. It is surely fit that before we begin anything else, or offer up any prayer to God, we should confess our sins, and ask pardon for them ; for David says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." We therefore offer up

THE GENERAL CONFESSION,

which is so called because it contains an acknowledgment, not of the sins of one person or another, but of us all.*

Bear in mind, we are to confess together. And it may be asked, how can we, with sins of such very different kinds, find words that will do for *all*? Thank God such words have been found. There are expressions here just fit for the purpose; "We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done." Surely no words can be more suitable to us all—to the youngest, as well as to the oldest, member of the Church.

As the Child repeats them, he remembers that he has been selfish and wayward, often

* See "Readings on the Morning and Evening Prayers," by Julia S. Blunt.

following his own inclinations. He has hurried perhaps to school without prayer, thus *leaving undone what he ought to have done*. He has been cross, or disobedient, or passionate, thus *doing what he ought not to have done*.

As the grown Man or Woman repeats these words, they seem to speak the language of his inmost soul. He is ready to acknowledge, "How much have I left undone—almost all that I was sent on earth to do! And as regards deeds that I ought not to have done, oh how long is the list, how grievous the number!"

And again, as other worshippers repeat these words, they are reminded of precious time that has been wasted, of money that has been squandered, and of but little love shown to Christ. They have indeed "followed too much the devices and desires of their own hearts," by loving their own ways better than God's. They "have offended against His holy law," both by leaving undone what was their duty, and also by doing what was forbidden.

But we go even further, and say still more

than this, in our confession ; for we declare that “there is *no health* in us.” Thus we acknowledge that we are altogether corrupt and sinful, diseased as it were from head to foot, with no soundness in us, no spiritual health in our souls. This is something like David’s acknowledgment, “Behold, I was shapen in wickedness ;” and St. Paul’s, “I know that in me dwelleth no good thing.” These are strong words ; but not too strong for sinners to use before a Holy God. They breathe the language of true and deep contrition.

But now, if you look to the close of the Prayer, you will see that it expresses hope ; it knocks at the door of mercy ; “But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders ; spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults ; restore thou them that are penitent.”

Having thus confessed one another’s sins, and having confessed each one his own, we implore God’s forgiveness ; entreating Him to spare us, and not to punish us as we deserve. You will see that we put forward no claim, no merit of ours, but we ask it in consequence of what He has promised to

all who come to Him in the Saviour's name ;
"According to thy mercy declared unto mankind in Christ Jesu our Lord."

And then we conclude by asking God to enable us to show our love and gratitude by living "a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of His name."

I said that this was a *general* confession for the whole congregation. And if you look at the Rubric, or heading, just before the prayer, you will see that *all* are called upon to join in it, and all are to do so *on their knees*.

In this prayer then especially, not one heart should remain untouched, not one voice should be silent. For have we not *all* need to confess our sins to God, and to seek forgiveness from Him? It should be the united utterance of many hearts, each "knowing its own bitterness," and each, under the pressure of its own necessities, crying for itself, and crying also for others.

And how utterly unseemly is it that we should *sit down*, as many do, whilst this humble confession is being made! The lowliest posture becomes us in our prayers; and surely if the heart is bowed down with a spirit of self-abase-

ment, we shall feel constrained to bend low before a Holy God. It is difficult, I know, in some churches to kneel; but in spite of the difficulty we should do so; or, if this cannot be managed, we should at any rate *stand up* whilst we address ourselves to God.

And remember, not in this prayer only, but in every prayer, kneeling is the fitting posture.

So much for the opening Prayer in our Service. And now, the Confession being ended, the minister rises up, and pronounces what is called

THE ABSOLUTION ;

the people still remaining on their knees before the Lord. As God's ambassador, he announces pardon in his Master's name. *He* has no power himself to forgive, but he declares *God's* willingness to forgive those who are truly penitent.

These are the words, "Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live; and

hath given power and commandment to his ministers to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins : he pardoneth and absolveth " —not all men, but " all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel " —in short, every penitent believer.

And then he finishes by begging them to ask God to grant them a really penitent heart, and also grace henceforth to live a pure and holy life.

It is a rule in our Church that only a Priest (that is, one in full orders) shall read this Absolution. With this exception, and the administering of the Holy Communion, a deacon may perform all the rest of the service.

Next follows

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

This is the Prayer of Prayers, which the Lord Himself has taught us, and which he intends to be a kind of pattern Prayer in all our approaches to the Throne of Grace. I will not do more than run through it very briefly.

In this Prayer we come before God as His children, and address Him as our heavenly Father ; " Our Father, which art in heaven."

There are seven separate petitions.

First, we pray that *God's name may be hallowed*, or revered, by all men.

Secondly, that *His kingdom may come* ; that is, that His gospel kingdom may spread far and wide, and that His kingdom of glory may soon be ours.

Thirdly, that *His will may be done* by us here on earth, as it is done by saints and angels in the world above. We say "*in* earth," and not *on* earth ; for the word *in* means throughout—that is to say, *in every part of the earth*.

Fourthly, we ask for *daily bread* to be given us ; that is, for a supply of all our wants, bodily and spiritual.

Fifthly, we implore God's forgiveness, looking upon our sins as *trespasses* or debts, which we must account for to God.

Sixthly, we beg of Him not to *lead us into temptation* ; that is, not to suffer us to be tempted above what we can bear.

Lastly, we entreat God to keep us from all

evil, both as regards our bodies and also our souls.

The Prayer winds up with the words, "For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever." This is called the *Doxology*. We find it in St. Matthew's Gospel, but not in St. Luke's. In it we acknowledge the greatness and glory of God; and therefore we feel assured that He is able to bestow all that we have asked for.

What a pity it is that this Prayer of our Lord's, which means so much, should from its very commonness be so little thought of by us! What a pity that these words should so often be repeated as if they meant nothing! May Christ Himself, who taught us the Prayer, teach us also how to use it!

Having now confessed our sins, having been assured of God's pardoning mercy by the mouth of His Minister, and having approached Him in the Saviour's own words, we now prepare ourselves for the work of *Praise*, by putting up a few short petitions. But of these I shall speak in the next chapter.

I trust that what has already been said

may lead you to take a greater interest in our Church Prayers. Ask God to make His House a Bethesda, "a house of mercy," to you, and to render His worship a joy and delight to your soul. Ask Him to enable you to come before Him with a penitent and contrite heart, and to praise Him with joyful lips. And each time that you are invited to assemble in His Sanctuary, may the feeling of your heart be, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand" elsewhere; "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth."

CHAPTER II.

THE PSALMS FOR THE DAY.

THE principal subject of this Chapter will be *the Psalms for the Day*.

Most of the Psalms contain words of *Praise*. And therefore, to prepare us for this portion of the Service, four Short Petitions are offered up. You will observe that two are uttered by the Minister, and two by the People. "O Lord, open thou our lips," says the one; and the others add, "And our mouth shall shew forth thy praise." You will find these very words in Ps. li. 15.

And why do we speak thus? Have we not power to open our mouths, and utter God's praises? No, we cannot do even this rightly; we can neither love God, nor praise Him as we ought, unless He touches our hearts, and unlocks our closed lips.

The Minister further prays, "O God, make

speed to save us"—that is, from our manifold sins which we have just been confessing. And the People add, "O Lord, make haste to help us"—that is, in the great duty we are now entering upon. Here again, if you turn to Ps. xl. 13, you will find almost the very words we use.

And mark how very earnest the expressions are; "O God, make *speed*;" "O Lord, make *haste*." This is the language of eager worshippers, who feel that their wants are pressing.

Having put up these short sentences of Prayer, the language of Praise bursts from our lips in what is called the "*Gloria Patri*." Being released, as it were, from the chain of our sins, we rise up, as St. Peter did when his chains fell from him. (Acts xii. 7, 8.) And thus standing on our feet, we gird ourselves for the holy work of Praise, which now begins; "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end."

The Minister then encourages the people, saying, "Praise ye the Lord"; which is the

same as if he said, "Hallelujah," for that means, "Praise ye the Lord." And the Congregation echo back the watchword, exclaiming with their united voices, "The Lord's name be praised."

You must have noticed that the *Gloria Patri* is repeated very often in our Services, and particularly in reading the Psalms ; for we use it at the close of every Psalm. And when we say, "Glory be to God," what do we mean? You know (says a Christian writer) what is meant when we speak of a *glorious* Building, or of a *glorious* Sunrise. We mean by it something beautiful and grand. And so, when we exclaim "Glory be to God," we seem to say, "Thou Lord, art all beauty and greatness. We offer thee our highest praise ; as it was seen in the beginning (at the Creation), is now (in all thy works and dealings), and shall be for ever."

Thus we give to God the glory due unto Him. We praise Him for all that He is in Himself, and all that He is to us.

After these strong expressions of Praise, we proceed at once to the reading of *the Psalms*.

In the Morning Service we have a Special Psalm appointed, before entering upon the Psalms of the Day. The one chosen is the Ninety Fifth, which is one of David's Psalms of Praise. And if you take a glance at it, you will at once see how suitable it is for the purpose.

The first Seven verses are upon the duty of praising God. We invite one another in them to sing unto the Lord, to rejoice in His salvation, to come into His presence with thanksgiving, and to fall on our knees before Him. And several reasons are given why we should do this—namely, because He is great ; because He has created us and preserves us ; and again, because he is specially *our* God, and *our* heavenly Shepherd.

The Four last verses contain a seasonable warning, lest we should presume upon God's goodness, and harden our hearts, thereby shutting ourselves out from our promised rest ; "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

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We now come to

THE PSALMS FOR THE DAY.

These are so appointed that the whole of them may be read through every month. They are a part of Holy Scripture, just as the Lessons are. And yet we make a difference between the two.

For instance, the congregation *stand* during the reading of the Psalms, and *sit* during the reading of the Scriptures. This is done because the Psalms contain more of Prayer and Praise than the rest of Scripture. In fact, they almost form a part of our devotions. Such was the custom too in days of old; for we are told that the Jewish Priests used to repeat the Psalms *standing*, in the temple worship; and to this David is supposed to have referred, when he said, "Bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night *stand* in the house of the Lord."

Again, the Psalms are read by the minister and people, *verse by verse alternately*. This too is an ancient practice. St. Basil, who lived not long after the Apostles, speaks of this custom even in his days. And truly if

the congregation do not bear their part, where was the use of the People exclaiming, a few minutes before, "Our mouth shall shew forth thy praise."

No part of Scripture is so suited perhaps to our every-day wants as the Psalms. In whatever state of mind we may be, there is sure to be something here for us. Are we happy? Here are words of thankfulness. Are we sad? Here we find the groanings of a heart seeking relief. Have we wants? Here is earnest prayer, in which to speak of them to God.

When the Psalms are being read, take your part in them. Read your verses aloud, and with attention. Let them be the means of raising your heart heavenwards, and of kindling a devout and thankful spirit within you.

At the end of each Psalm we praise God by pouring forth again those thrilling words which have been already explained to you; "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," &c. Thus we remind one another that we owe all to God, and that He is worthy of all our adoration.

You have perhaps sometimes wondered why the Psalms in our Prayer Book are not exactly the same as the Psalms in the Bible. The reason is this. The Psalms, and the other parts of the Old Testament, were originally written in Hebrew. In the year 1380 an effort was made to translate the Bible into English. Some years later our Prayer Book was drawn up; and the best translation of the Psalms which *then* existed was made use of. And when, afterwards, another translation of the Bible was published, people had become so familiar with the old translation of the Psalms, that it was thought well not to change it, and especially as it was in the main a good one.

This will account for there being *two* versions, or translations, which differ a little from each other. And for the same reason the Lord's Prayer is not given in exactly the same words in the Prayer Book, as we have it in the Bible.

In any case, let us be very thankful that we have both our Bible and our Prayer Book in *English*; so that we can read "in our own tongue the wonderful works of God," and

express in our own language those Prayers which we have so much need to offer.

You may perhaps also have noticed that in each verse of the Psalms there is one of those stops which we call a *colon*, consisting of two dots. Now, this has nothing to do with the meaning, but is merely a musical stop to help those who chant or sing the Psalms.

Again, in the Bible Version, we sometimes come to the word "*Selah*." This too has probably nothing to do with the meaning, but perhaps refers to the music.

Let us never read the Psalms as a mere matter of form, but prayerfully and devoutly, as men and women who are not offering "the sacrifice of fools," but who feel the importance of the words they are uttering.

CHAPTER III.

THE LESSONS.—THE CANTICLES.—THE
CREED.

WE now come to the *Lessons*. The reading of them is not so much an act of devotion, as a means of edification and instruction. A chapter is read from the Old Testament, and one also from the New. Having (according to the Exhortation) "set forth God's most worthy praise" in the Psalms, we proceed to "hear his most holy word" in the Lessons.

I called your attention in one of the foregoing chapters to the rich vein of Scripture which runs through our Services. It is the glory of the Church of England that she thus honours God's word. See how large an amount of the actual Bible is read.

First, we have *the Opening Sentences*, which are verses from the Bible. Then we have in

the Morning *the Ninety-fifth Psalm*. Next *the Psalms for the Day*. Then two regular Chapters, Morning and Evening, as *Daily Lessons*; each Lesson being followed by a *Canticle*, or Hymn, mostly taken from Scripture.* And lastly, two Scripture portions, called the *Epistle and Gospel*.

The framers of our Liturgy thought it well to give us a *special* Lesson out of the Old Testament for each Service. They have therefore made a selection of those chapters which they considered to be the most important, and which bring before us the most striking events in the Bible History. The New Testament Lessons are read daily in regular order. As regards Christmas, Easter, and the other great Festivals of the Church, such *Proper Lessons* are chosen as are suitable to these Christian seasons.

The selection of one Lesson from the Old Testament, and one from the New, is perhaps to show the harmony and agreement between the Law and the Gospel. For what is the Law but a shadow of the Gospel? And what

* All these Canticles are portions of the Bible, excepting the *Te Deum* and the *Benedicite*.

is the Gospel but the fulfilment of the Law? That which lies in the Old Testament under a kind of shadow is in the New brought out, as it were, into the open sunshine.

This reading of *Two Lessons*, one from the Old Testament and the other from the New, is a very ancient practice. Justin Martyr, who lived many hundred years ago, says, "It was the custom in his day to read Lessons out of the *Prophets* and *Apostles* in the Assemblies of the Faithful.

How deep and serious should be the attention we pay to this part of the Service—the reading of God's word! If any one had a Letter in his possession from one of our Friends, or from our Sovereign, and were to name some house where he would read out to us this Letter, with what deep interest should we go and listen to it! Holy Scripture is such a letter; and it contains a word to each of God's children, a word calculated to do them unspeakable good, and to teach them the truest knowledge. It contains a message from our heavenly Father. It is the voice of inspiration speaking to us.

Whenever the Lessons are read then, try

and pay great attention to them. We should listen with a humble, teachable, believing spirit. Our frame of mind should be that of Samuel, when he said, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Pray for the Holy Spirit's help; and as you listen to verse after verse, ask God to carry home His truth to your very heart. Ask Him to feed your hungry soul, and nourish you unto eternal life.

But is not God's truth brought before us also in *the Sermon*? Certainly it is. The difference however between the Lessons and the Sermon is that the Lessons are God's pure and unmixed word; the Sermon is man's word, explaining and expounding the Word of God. In the one, *God* Himself speaks to us; in the other *Man* speaks to us in God's name.

I have read of a poor Christian Woman, who, on being asked as she returned from church, whether she had not been greatly pleased with what she had heard from the preacher, answered that he had preached well, and that there was *a great deal of good in his sermon*. But she added that she loved to hear the Minister *in white* better, for when he

read out of the great Book, *that was all good*. She loved her Minister, who spoke to her in the Saviour's name; but she liked those words from his mouth the best which were not his own words, but God's.*

Both the Lessons however and the Sermon are important, each in its place. For we cannot feel our sins, nor desire humbly to confess them—we cannot feel our wants, nor tell them out to God in earnest prayer—we cannot feel His mercy, nor praise Him for it—without faith; and are we not told that “faith cometh by *hearing*, and hearing by *the Word of God?*”

So I say that both the reading and the preaching of God's Word are very important; and therefore our Lord gives us this caution, “Take heed how ye hear.”

Oh that He may give us a willing and attentive ear, and a thoughtful and teachable heart, so that when the Lessons are being read, or the Sermon is being preached, we may “receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save our soul!”

* See “Sermons on the Liturgy,” by the Rev. W. Champneys.

I have already mentioned *the Canticles*, or Hymns, one of which we say or sing after each of the Lessons.

The First of them is called the *Te Deum*, and begins with the words, "We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord." It is a very beautiful Hymn of Praise, supposed to have been written about fifteen hundred years ago.* It is one of the noblest of our Church Hymns, full of the most glowing and heart-stirring thoughts, and well fitted to raise our sluggish hearts, and draw forth our feelings of gratitude. If you turn to it, you will see that in the first four verses we speak of God's people on earth, and those in heaven, uniting to praise Him. In the fifth verse He is called "the Lord God of *Sabaoth*." The word "*Sabaoth*" is a Hebrew word, and is used in Scripture to signify *hosts*. In the verses which follow Apostles, Prophets, and Martyrs are spoken of as praising God; for, though dead, their actions and examples are still before us, and

* It is said to have been composed by St. Ambrose, and to have been sung first at the Baptism of St. Augustine.

they themselves are engaged in praising Him in heaven.

Towards the end of the Canticle we ask God to bless His "heritage;" that is, *His people* who belong to Him. And two verses on we say, "Day by day we *magnify* thee;" to magnify God means to *glorify* Him, and to sound His praises.

There is another Canticle, which may be used instead of the Te Deum. It is called *The Benedicite*; and sometimes it is also called *The Song of the Three Children*, because it is supposed to have been sung by Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, after their wonderful delivery. If you turn to the hundred and forty-eighth Psalm, you will see how much this song resembles it. Both in that Psalm and in the Canticle the whole creation is called upon to praise and bless the Lord for His goodness. And in the last verse you will see that Ananias, Azarias, and Misael (which are other names for Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego), call upon themselves also to bless, praise, and magnify the Lord.

There are six more Canticles, one or other

of which is to be read after each Lesson. These are all taken either from the Psalms or from the Gospels.

There is one more portion of the Service that I shall notice in this chapter ; and that is

THE BELIEF OR CREED.

Immediately after the Lessons we rehearse the Belief. You will observe, the Belief is not a Prayer any more than the Exhortation. It is simply a form of words in which we declare our faith. We therefore *stand up*, and declare " I believe so and so."

There are Three separate Creeds used in our Church ; the Apostles' Creed, the Athanasian, and the Nicene Creed.

The one which we usually repeat immediately after the Lessons is called *the Apostles' Creed*, because it is the most ancient Creed that we have, having been probably drawn up near to the time of the Apostles. In it we declare that we believe in God the Father, the Almighty Maker of the world ; in God the Son, who came on earth to die for us, and

will one day be our Judge; and also in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifies us, or makes us holy. And further, we express our belief in the Catholic or Universal Church; in the Communion or Fellowship of God's Saints; in the Forgiveness of the penitent; in the Resurrection from the grave; and in everlasting Life in heaven.

There are two expressions in this Creed, which perhaps need a word of explanation. When it is said that our Lord "descended into *Hell*," it does not mean that He went actually into the very place of torments, but into *the place of departed spirits*. The expression is taken from those words in the Sixteenth Psalm, in which David says, in the name of Christ, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in *hell*, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption."

Again, God the Son is spoken of as coming "to judge the *quick* and the dead." The *quick* here signifies the *living*, those who will be alive when He comes.

On certain high days, such as Easter, Whitsunday, and others, we use the *Athanasian*

Creed instead. This Creed was so called from a Bishop named Athanasius, who lived about fourteen hundred years ago. He was thought, at one time, to have drawn it up; but it is generally considered now that he was not the author of it. It enters much more into particulars than the other Creeds, but is more difficult to be understood.

This Creed contains a sound statement of truth, as regards the Holy Trinity; and it speaks clearly and boldly concerning the Manhood and Divinity of our Lord. So long as we have it in our Prayer Books we cannot well go wrong on these important subjects. Others may go astray from the path of truth; but whilst we have such a guide-post as this, we Churchmen cannot well lose our way.

Two or three of the clauses are very strong; but not stronger perhaps than the declarations of Scripture. Compare them with such passages as these—Mark xvi. 16; John iii. 18; John v. 10, 11.

The *Nicene Creed* is used in the Communion Service. It is a little more ancient than the Athanasian Creed. The name "Nicene"

was given to it, because it was drawn up by a Council which was held at Nicæa in Asia.

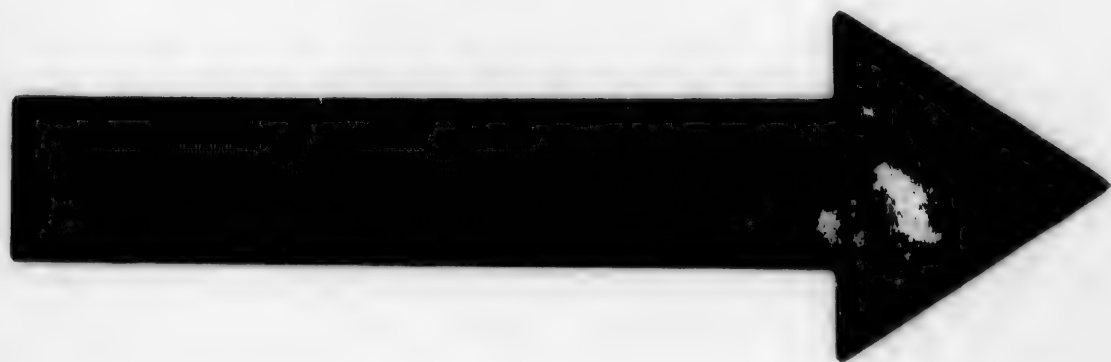
You remember that St. Paul says, "Faith cometh by hearing." It is well then that having heard God's word in the Lessons, we should rise up and declare our *faith* or belief. But bear in mind that there is such a thing as a cold, dead, barren faith. A person may repeat the Creed all through whenever he goes to God's house, and yet he may not have a spark of real, living, saving faith. When the Message of God is read to us from the Bible, it is not enough to say, "All this is true." We must go farther. We must believe it with our hearts, and be ready to confess it with our lips.

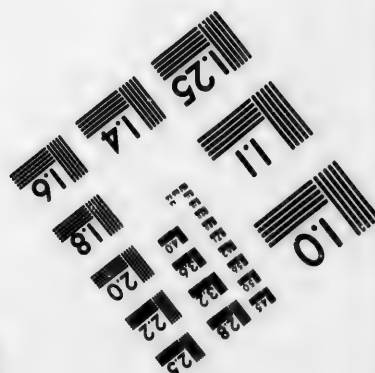
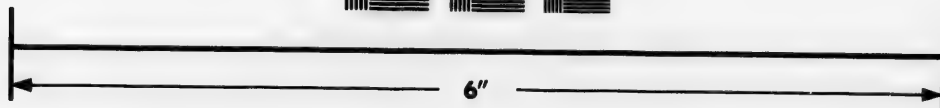
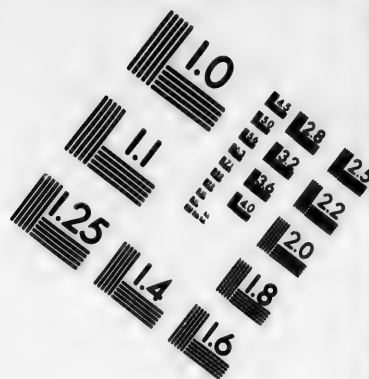
For instance, when we read that Christ died upon the cross for sinners, we all I suppose believe that it was so. But still many of us go on living as if He had never died for us. What we need is that God should so touch our hearts by His Holy Spirit, that we may feel a conviction of our guilt, and may flee in earnest to that Saviour for pardon and acceptance, determined to live henceforth a life of devotedness to Him.

One more thing I will remark about the Creed. We do not say in it, "*We* believe." But each one declares for himself "*I* believe—I believe for myself—I set to my own seal that God is true."

There is something very solemn in this. And it should lead us, each one, to examine himself, "Am I really a Believer?" Each one of us is answerable to God. Each one of us must stand alone before the judgment-seat. Each one of us must believe on Christ for himself.

May God give us that precious faith which cometh from above; so that we, who confess our Lord together in the House of Prayer, may be with Him for ever in His courts above!





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CHAPTER IV.

THE SHORT SENTENCES. PRAYERS AND
COLLECTS.

THE great object for which we meet in God's house is for *Prayer*. It is written, "My house shall be called an House of *Prayer*." God loves to hear His people pray, wherever they may be. But He *especially* delights to listen to the prayers which are offered up in His own house. Where two or three are gathered together in His name, there He is specially present. This is our great encouragement in meeting our Brother Christians in the Sanctuary. We *may* feel, and we *ought* to feel, that our Lord is then actually in the midst of us.

We have already considered the first part of the Service; namely, the Opening Sen-

tences, the Exhortation, the General Confession, the Absolution, the Lord's Prayer, the Psalms, Lessons, Canticles, and Creeds.

Let us now go on with the next part of the Service, which consists of actual Prayer.

The Creed being ended, the Minister turns to the People, and utters a salutation, "The Lord be with you." To which they reply, "And with thy spirit"; that is, May He be with thy spirit! *He* prays that they may enjoy the feeling of God's presence; and *they* pray that God's presence may also be with him.

He then summons them to prayer by saying, "Let us pray." We have been hearing God's word; we have been declaring our belief in God's truth; now let us give ourselves unto *Prayer*.

In some of the old Forms of Worship, we find that the Minister used often to call upon the People—"Let us pray earnestly"; and again, "Let us pray more earnestly." It is well now and then to be reminded by some such words of the solemn work in which we

are engaged. Our minds are so apt to wander and go astray, that we need something to call them back.

We begin with Three Short Cries for mercy; "Lord, have mercy upon us"; "Christ, have mercy upon us"; "Lord, have mercy upon us." And then the Lord's Prayer is again used, but without the Doxology at the end.

After the Lord's Prayer comes another cluster of SHORT PETITIONS, in which we pray for the Queen, for Christ's Ministers, and for the whole Church at large, asking God to save His people, and to bless His inheritance. We also pray that we may enjoy the great blessing of Peace, and that God Himself would be pleased so to fight for us, that we may be kept from the horrors of War; "Give peace in our time, O Lord"; "Because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O Lord."

After this, a number of Prayers or Collects follow. They are called Collects, because in them our wants are *collected* together, as it

were, and much is expressed in a very few words.

The First that we use is

THE COLLECT FOR THE DAY,

which is again repeated in the Communion Service. These Collects, which are nearly a hundred in number, are most of them extremely ancient, having been used in the Church for many hundred years. They breathe a sweet spirit of devotion, and express the wants of every earnest heart.

Next we have

A COLLECT FOR PEACE.

We address God in it as "the Author of peace, and the lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth (that is, in knowing whom consisteth) our eternal life;" thus echoing, as it were, our Lord's words, in which He declares, "This is life eternal, that they might *know thee*, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." And then we pray to Him to defend us against our many enemies, and to protect us in all our spiritual dangers.

A third Collect follows, which is called,

A COLLECT FOR GRACE.

In it we thank our heavenly Father for having safely brought us to the beginning of the day; and we ask Him to preserve us through it, and especially to keep us from sin.

And here THE LITANY comes in, which is used on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, in the Morning Service. But I shall speak of this presently.

When however the Litany is not used, we go on with

A PRAYER FOR THE QUEEN,

Beseeching God to bless her both in body and soul.

And this is followed by

A PRAYER FOR THE ROYAL FAMILY.

In both these Prayers we ask for the *best* blessings on those who are set over us in the Lord. Feeling the many trials to which their high station exposes them, we plead for them, and entreat God to take them under His keeping.

Next we offer up

A PRAYER FOR THE CLERGY AND PEOPLE.

Here we ask God to send down His blessing on our "Bishops and *Curates*." By the word "*Curates*" is meant all those whom the Bishops, who are the Chief Pastors, have entrusted with the care, or *cure*, of souls.

The closing Prayer is called

THE PRAYER OF ST. CHRYSOSTOM,

because it was composed by a great and good Bishop of that name, who lived fourteen or fifteen hundred years ago. You will see that it is a Prayer to Christ, the Second Person in the Trinity, asking Him to fulfil His own promise, and give to us who are gathered together in His name the things which we have asked for, so far at least as He sees them to be good for us.

The Minister closes with

THE BENEDICTION, OR BLESSING,

after the manner of the Apostles. We shall find the very words at the end of St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians.

There are Two COLLECTS belonging to the Evening Service, which I must not leave unnoticed. One of these is called

THE SECOND COLLECT AT EVENING PRAYER.

In it we pray for that "peace which the world cannot give," thus reminding us of our Lord's legacy to His people, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: *not as the world giveth* give I unto you."

In the other, which is called

THE COLLECT FOR AID AGAINST ALL PERILS, we ask God to "lighten our darkness," and to take us under His care during the coming night. Not only do we beg here, that the shadows of the night may pass away, and that the light of the sun may shine upon us again; but we also pray that God may enlighten by His Holy Spirit the thicker darkness of our souls.

Are not the several Prayers and Collects, which we have now dwelt upon, admirably suited to our wants as weak and sinful crea-

tures? You will observe that almost all are offered in the name, or for the sake, or through the merits of Christ. And why so?

It is not a mere form, which we happen to use from custom. There is a reason why we offer up every petition in the Saviour's name. And what is the reason? It is that we dare not come to God in our own name. As sinners we should have no hope of being heard if we did so. And further, our Lord Himself has expressly declared that "whatsoever we shall ask the Father *in His name* He will give it us."

This is the reason then why we add expressions like those which I have mentioned, at the end of our Prayers, whether long or short. We look upon Christ as our Advocate with the Father, and we come to Him in the all-prevailing name of His dear Son.

Then think what you are doing, when you thus plead in your Saviour's name; and believe that you will most assuredly be heard for His sake, and through His mediation. You may feel too that although your best Prayers are but poor and weak *in themselves*, they become all-powerful when put up in Christ's name.

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CHAPTER V.

THE LITANY.

LET us now turn our attention to that important and delightful part of the Morning Service, THE LITANY. I have already reminded you that it was originally intended to be used as a separate Service; and it is sometimes so used in the present day.

The word *Litany* means *Supplication*; and a very earnest supplication it is both for ourselves and for others. We use it, both Minister and People, on our knees before God's footstool.

The Litany contains Three kinds of Prayer.

1st. *Deprecatory* Prayer, or Prayer for deliverance from certain Evils.

2dly. *Intercessory* Prayer, or Prayer for certain Persons.

3dly. *Supplicatory* Prayer, or Prayer for certain Blessings.

We begin by calling upon God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, to show us mercy. This is called *the Invocation*. And then we add a general request that the Lord would spare us whom He has redeemed, or bought, with His precious blood.

Having thus addressed the Holy Trinity, we then pray

1st. For *Deliverance from certain evils*—such as from the Assaults of the devil; from Pride, and other sins of the heart; from Lightning and Tempest; from Sickness, War, and Sudden Death. Then again, we pray to be delivered from Rebellion, Religious Divisions, and Hardness of heart. And especially we ask God to protect and deliver us both in the time of our Affliction, and also of our *Wealth* (that is, our *Welfare*, when all goes well with us); in the trying hour of our Death, and in the awful Day of Judgment.

And observe the plea that we urge. We press our Lord to grant us all this on

account of what He has done for us—on account of His Incarnation (or coming into the world in our flesh); His Nativity or Birth, His Baptism, Fasting, and Temptation in the wilderness; and still further, by His Agony and Bloody Sweat, and by His Death and Resurrection.

It is very clear that in this part of the Litany, and also in other portions of it, we address Christ; for you will observe we say “By *thy* holy incarnation, by *thy* cross and passion,” and so on. And it is well to observe, in our Services generally, how very often Prayer is made to the Son of God. It is not only offered *in His name*, but actually *to Him*. We may well be thankful that it is so, for it shows that those who drew up our Prayer Book desired to honour the Saviour, the Second Person in the Holy Trinity, and to acknowledge Him as “God over all blessed for ever.”

In all these petitions for Deliverance which we have glanced at, the Congregation are expected to take their part, by adding at the end of each petition the words, “*Good Lord, deliver us.*” This is a sort of prayerful

chorus, in which every tongue and every heart should join.

2dly. We *intercede for certain Persons*—for our Queen, and for the Royal Family; for Bishops, Priests, and Deacons; for the Lords of the Council (that is, the Queen's advisers); for Judges and Magistrates; and lastly for all God's People.

3dly. We put up our *supplication for certain Blessings*—for Unity and Peace among the Nations of the Earth; for hearts to love and fear God; for a blessing on His word; for the Conversion of sinners; for the Comfort and Strengthening of the weak; and for the Restoration of the fallen. We plead for all who are in trouble; for the Traveller by land or by sea; for the Woman in her trial; for the Sick; for the Little Children; for the Prisoner in the gaol; for the Captive in the dungeon; for the Fatherless, and the Widow; for a blessing on our Enemies, and those who may have done or said anything against us. We ask God to prosper our labours in the fields. And lastly, we beseech Him to “endue

us with the grace of the Holy Spirit, to amend our lives according to his holy word."

At the end of each of these Sentences the Congregation with one united voice exclaims, "*We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.*" Indeed the Sentences are not complete without this addition from the People.

When these short, but beautiful, petitions have been offered up, we break out with a few ejaculatory cries addressed to Christ, beseeching Him to hear us, to give us His peace, and to show us mercy.

We then again use the Lord's Prayer, and Two very short Petitions which follow it—"*O Lord, deal not with us after our sins;*" "*Neither reward us after our iniquities.*" The expression "*after our sins,*" and "*after our iniquities,*" means *according to* our sins and iniquities. These Petitions are taken from that well known verse in the Hundred and third Psalm, "He hath not dealt with us *after* our sins, nor rewarded us *according to* our iniquities."

The Minister then says, "*Let us pray,*" and offers up a Prayer to our merciful

Father, that He would help us in all our troubles, and especially in any persecution which the devil or wicked men may stir up against us. During this Prayer all should silently join in heart, though not in voice.

At the end of it the whole Congregation cry out with one voice, "O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us for thy name's sake." And this, with a slight alteration, is repeated again, the Minister meanwhile declaring that we do not forget the wonderful deliverances wrought in days past; "O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us the noble works that thou didst in their days, and in the old time before them." Thus, as it were, a reason is given why we should expect God to help us now—even because He *has helped us* in times past.

Then follow *Two short Supplications*, uttered by the Minister and the People alternately. Here again you will observe that we address *Christ*, asking Him to defend us, to look mercifully upon us, and to forgive us, "as we do put our trust in Him."

Once more, the Minister says, "*Let us pray*"; and puts up a solemn Prayer to God, entreating Him to look with mercy upon our infirmities, or weaknesses, and to ward off from us those evils that we have so richly deserved; granting us a trustful confidence in Him, and a desire to serve Him by a holy and devoted life.

The Closing Prayer of St. Chrysostom, and the concluding Blessing, I have already spoken of.

There are a few expressions in the Litany which need a little further explanation.

For instance, we begin by addressing God as "*the Father of heaven.*" This means, our Father who *belongs to heaven*, or who is *in heaven*.

We say, "O God the Holy Ghost, *proceeding from the Father* and the Son, &c." This is best explained by those words of our Lord in John xv. 26, where He says, "When the Comforter is come, whom *I will send* unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which *proceedeth from* the Father, he shall testify of me." So that Jesus speaks

of the Holy Ghost as proceeding or coming both from the Father, and also from Himself.

We pray also to be delivered from "*sudden death*"—that is, from death *for which we are unprepared*; for truly this is the only suddenness that a Christian need fear.

Again, we pray to be delivered "from all sedition, *privy conspiracy*, and rebellion; from all false doctrine, *heresy* and *schism*." By "*privy Conspiracy*" we mean private plottings against government. By "*Heresy*" is meant all wrong opinions about religion. And the word "*Schism*" signifies all those divisions, by which Christians wilfully separate themselves from the main Body of Christ's people.

A little further on, we pray for our Queen, "that she may evermore have *affiance* in God;" that is, that she may have *confidence and trust* in Him.

When we pray for "the *Magistrates*," we in fact ask for God's blessing and guidance on all those who administer the laws of our country.

In one of the petitions we ask God "to

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give us an heart to love and *dread*" Him; that is, to fear Him. For though we would not have the shrinking fear of *slaves*, we do desire to have the holy, loving, dutiful fear of *children*.

Lastly, we speak of "the *kindly* fruits of the earth"; that is, the fruits of the earth *after their kind*, or the different kinds of fruits.

I have now brought before you what is perhaps the most beautiful portion of our Public Worship. Does not the Litany contain almost everything that, as a Congregation, we have need to pray for? Have we friends far away in foreign lands, or on the wide ocean? Are there any sick or afflicted, whom we love to think of? Their wants are here brought before God. Does Scripture tell us that prayers and supplications should be made for Kings and others? Most heartily do we plead for these in the Litany.

There is much that is very touching in it; much that comes home to every heart. I once read of a Seafaring Man, who married a Person of a different persuasion from himself. During the time that they remained at

home after their marriage they were accustomed on Sundays to go to a certain point where their ways divided. And there he took the right-hand road to the church, and she took the left to her own place of worship. This continued till he was again called to sea. But on the Sunday after his departure, when the Wife came to the usual place of parting, she felt that she should like to go and worship where her Husband had gone, if it were only to keep up a feeling of fellowship with him.

When the Clergyman called upon her soon after, she said to him, "I shall always worship in your Church, for I might have gone elsewhere long enough, and never heard them pray for my poor Husband, among those that are 'travelling by land or by water.'"

You see there was a chord touched by this petition, which made the poor Woman's heart rejoice.

All we want is grace to use these Prayers aright. Ask God then to give you His Holy Spirit to soften your heart, to humble you in His presence, and to make you feel that His

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eyes are open, and His ears attentive, to your cries.

God grant that you may henceforth understand better the Prayers you are so often in the habit of offering, and use them with greater heartiness ! Thus will your worship be more acceptable to God than it has ever yet been.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE PRAYER USED IN EMBER WEEKS—
THE PRAYER FOR PARDON—THE
PRAYER FOR PARLIAMENT—THE
PRAYER FOR ALL CONDITIONS OF
MEN—THE GENERAL THANKSGIVING.

ST. PAUL says, in writing to Timothy, "I exhort therefore that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men." Here then we have the direction of an Apostle concerning Prayer in general, but more especially concerning *Public Prayer*. The words "Supplications," "Prayers," "Intercessions," "Giving of Thanks," seem to point out *the different parts* of Public Worship. In another passage the same Apostle says, "In all things by *prayer*, and *supplication*, with *thanksgiving*, let your requests be made unto God."

Now, our Prayer Book helps us to do just what the Apostle recommends. It puts suitable Prayers and Supplications into our mouth, and such Thanksgivings and Praises as become those who have reason to be thankful.

We have already examined together the greater number of these Prayers, which we commonly use in our Morning and Evening Services. But there are Five still remaining to which I am now desirous of calling your attention.

I. A PRAYER FOR THOSE THAT ARE TO BE ADMITTED INTO HOLY ORDERS.

Two Prayers are given us, of which we are to choose one. This is appointed to be read at certain special times of the year; namely, at those Four Seasons called the Ember Weeks, when Candidates are admitted into Holy Orders. The whole Church is called upon to remember these Seasons; for every member of the Church is deeply concerned in the Ordination of fit persons for the sacred ministry.

If you look into Acts xiii., you will see that the Holy Ghost said to the Christians at Antioch, "Separate me Paul and Barnabas for

the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had *fasted* and *prayed*, and *laid their* hands on them, they sent them away." And so, when men are separated now for the great and important work of the ministry, the whole Church is invited to unite together in earnest prayer, that the Bishops, who now fill the place of the Apostles, may be so guided by God Himself, "that they may lay hands suddenly on no man, but faithfully and wisely make choice of fit persons to serve in the sacred ministry of His Church."

And during these Ember Weeks, not only should we offer up our Prayers *in public* for those who are to be ordained, but we should bear them on our hearts *in private* also, and plead earnestly with God for them. For those have indeed great need of our prayers, who are just going to enter, in all their weakness, upon so high and holy an office.

And now we pass on to another short but beautiful Prayer, namely

II. A PRAYER FOR PARDON,

which may be used either in the Morning or

in the Evening Service ; or may be omitted altogether.

The object of this Prayer is to ask God to pardon our sins, and to receive our petitions. It runs thus ; " O God, whose nature and property is ever to have mercy and to forgive, receive our humble petitions." It is God's nature or character to be merciful and forgiving : it is His " property " ; that is, it belongs to Him to do so. For this reason then we believe that He will hear our prayers. And we are further encouraged to ask Him to loose us from the chains and bondage of our sins.

Such is this short but earnest Prayer, so full of penitent feeling, and yet of hope. It breathes indeed the very spirit and essence of the gospel.

Next we come to

III. THE PRAYER FOR THE PARLIAMENT.

This gives us an opportunity of praying for our Country generally, and also for the Parliament assembled under the authority of our Sovereign. And well it is that those who

are engaged in deliberating together for the welfare of our realm should have a place in our Prayers. Ought we not to entreat God to guide their councils for the advancement of His glory, the good of His Church and People, the welfare of our Queen, and the prosperity of her dominions? This Prayer will touch a chord in the hearts of all who care for their country, and desire its well-being.

There is an expression used here, which may be mistaken. We call the Sovereign, "our *most religious* and gracious Queen." This refers to her office, and not to her personal character. It is intended to show the reverence we pay to her, as the one whom God has chosen to rule over us. We cannot however be too thankful that we have at present a really gracious and religious Queen; but there have been times when the Sovereign of the country has not ruled in the fear of God. Still we should speak with reverence of so high an office.

And now I must ask you to fix your attention upon one of the most important Prayers in our Service—

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IV. THE PRAYER FOR ALL CONDITIONS OF
MEN.

This Prayer we always use when the Litany is not read. You will observe that in it we address God as "the Creator and Preserver of all mankind." And we pray first that He will bring all nations to the knowledge of Himself, and make them partakers of His salvation—"that thou wouldest be pleased to make thy ways known unto them, thy saving health unto all nations." This is what we ask for *the world at large*, or those many millions who are living without God, and who as yet know Him not.

But more especially we intercede for the Catholic Church; that is, for the whole Church of Christ; not merely for our own Church, but for the *Universal* Church; for the word Catholic means General or Universal. We pray that it may be guided by the Holy Spirit, and that all who profess to be Christians may be led more and more into the truth, and may firmly hold the faith of Christ "in unity of Spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life."

You will observe we do not pray that all

Christians may be brought to think just as we think, but that they "may be led into *the way of truth*." For the nearer we all get to that, the nearer we shall be to each other. Truth has been compared to a Target. When every arrow goes straight to its point, then they will all meet. And so the nearer we get to the truth, the more closely we shall draw to one another.

When we pray "for *the good estate* of the Catholic Church," we entreat God that its state or condition may be blest by Him.

Finally, we commend to our gracious Father (just as we do in the Litany) all who are afflicted in any way; in *mind* (such as the sorrowing and the conscience-stricken); in *body* (such as the sick and the maimed); or in *estate* (such as the poor, the needy, and the ruined). And what we ask for all these is, not merely that they may be relieved from their present sufferings, but that they may be enabled patiently to bear whatever God sees fit to bring upon them, and that all may end for their good—that they may have "a happy issue out of all their afflictions."

You see that this Prayer contains much

that we have also in the Litany ; and therefore they are never both used in the same Service. Here however all is summed up in much fewer words than in the Litany,

The Church has specially provided here, that any afflicted Person, whether present or absent, may have the prayers of his Brethren. In this case we add the words, "especially him (or her) for whom our prayers are desired." And is there not something very delightful in the thought that we thus have a Link, as it were, which unites the absent and the afflicted to their Brethren who are meeting together in God's house ; so that no one need feel that he is cut off from the Congregation, or altogether shut out from the prayers of his fellow-worshippers ? For my own part, if I were laid upon a bed of sickness, or were suffering from any special trial, it would be no small comfort to me to feel that my Brother Christians were bearing me on their hearts before God.

There yet remains another Prayer, to which our attention is directed, namely ;

V. THE GENERAL THANKSGIVING.

For although in the Psalms, and in other parts of the Service, we "set forth God's most worthy praise," yet it is very desirable that we should put up a *special* Thanksgiving Prayer, so as to render thanks for the great mercies and benefits which we are continually receiving.

In this, as well as in the other Prayers, the opening words have much to do with what follows. For instance, in that Second Prayer which we considered just now we prayed for Forgiveness ; and therefore we addressed God as One "whose nature and property is ever to have mercy and to *forgive*." In the Prayer which we last considered, we interceded for our Christian Brethren, and for the whole world at large ; hence we addressed God as the "Creator and Preserver of *all mankind*." And here, when about to pour forth our grateful thanksgivings, we approach God as "the Father of all *mercies*."

This General Thanksgiving is as wide in the subjects of *praise*, as the other was in those of *prayer*. There is scarcely any mercy, temporal or spiritual, which we ever have

received, or ever can receive, that is not included here.

We begin by thanking God for our Creation ; next for our Preservation from day to day ; and then for all our earthly Blessings. But we mention *one* blessing "above all," because it is the greatest of all ; namely, our redemption by Christ ; and we also thank God for "the means of grace" which we enjoy now, and the hope of heaven which is before us.

Thus we mount up higher and higher through a long scale of blessings which we receive from God ; from temporal to spiritual ; from the first blessing we receive on coming into the world, to the last crowning one when He takes us to Himself.

In this Prayer also there is a Sentence which may be introduced at the request of any member of the Congregation. An opportunity is given to any one who may wish to return special thanks for some special mercy.

We read in the Gospels of Nine Unthankful Lepers, who, being cleansed, returned not to give glory to God. But one *did* return, full of thankfulness. May we be like him ;

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And see how we end this Prayer. Feeling that our best Thanksgivings are wanting in thankfulness, and that our most hearty Praises are not so hearty as they should be, we close this General Thanksgiving by asking that God would "give us such a due sense of all his mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly (or sincerely) thankful; and that we show forth his praise not with our lips only, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to his service, and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life."

Truly this is the real end of all Prayer and Praise, that it should be shown forth by our living to God; that it should not be a *lip*-service, but a *life*-service, offered and accepted through Christ.

We are directed in many passages of Holy Scripture to make "giving of thanks" a part of our worship; and we are told that this is especially acceptable to God. It is not that He would have our poor words as a kind of

payment for His gifts ; but it is that He loves to see in us that gratitude which bursts forth in praises.

A poor Woman, who had with difficulty been able to bring a small offering towards some religious object, was once taunted by a scoffer, who told her that God did not want her penny. This was true in one sense ; for God did not *need* her gifts. Neither does God *want* the crowns that the saints in heaven cast at His feet. But He graciously accepts them. And so with our Thanksgivings ; He does not *need* them, but He loves to accept them, as tokens of our grateful feelings towards Him.

And now I think we have gone through all the Prayers, with the exception of those in the Communion Service, which I propose to examine in the next chapter.

David says in one of his Psalms that we should "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." And I cannot conceive anything more beautiful in His sight than a congregation of holy worshippers offering up their prayers and praises to the great Father of us

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all; offering them, not with cold hearts and dumb voices, but with all the lowliness of those who feel their sins, and with all the thankfulness of those who can rejoice in God's pardoning mercy, and love to give vent to their gratitude.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE COMMUNION OFFICE.

WE use the First Part of this Service every Sunday Morning, and on other Holy Days, whether the Holy Communion is administered or not. But we must bear in mind that it was originally intended that *the whole Service* should be used, and that the Lord's Supper should be administered, on every Sunday and Holy Day. Yes, it was the intention of our Church that her children should gather around the Saviour's Table much oftener than they now do.

The Service begins with THE LORD'S PRAYER. This is followed by a short but very beautiful COLLECT, in which we ask that the thoughts of our hearts may be cleansed "by the inspiration (or breathing into them)

of the Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love him, and worthily magnify (that is, glorify or honour) his holy name."

And have we not much need of cleansing, before we draw near to the Table of our Lord? David felt that he needed it, when he said, "I will wash mine hands in innocence, O Lord; and so will I go to thine altar."

Then THE TEN COMMANDMENTS are read out, and after each the People ask God to have mercy upon them as regards the past, and to incline their hearts henceforth to keep the particular commandment which has just been rehearsed to them. After the reading of the Tenth and last Commandment the words of the Prayer are a little changed, and we beseech God to write all His laws in our hearts."

We next have A PRAYER FOR THE QUEEN. Two are given us, either of which we may use.

In the First we pray for mercy upon the whole Church; that is, upon all God's

people. We then ask Him to rule the heart of our Sovereign; so that she may honour Him, remembering that she is God's minister, or servant, and accountable to Him for all she does. We further pray that we may "serve, honour, and obey her *in thee*, and *for thee*"; that means, *in thy sight*, and *for thy sake*.

In the Second Prayer we acknowledge that the hearts of kings are in God's power, and that He can "dispose and turn them, as it seemeth best to His godly wisdom." This is taken from those words of Solomon in Prov. xxi. 1, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water. He turneth it whithersoever he will." Since our Sovereign then is in God's hands, we beseech Him to guide and direct her, so that she may ever seek His honour and glory, and the good of His people.

You will see that the word "wealth" is used here with just the same meaning as it has in the Litany. In both places it signifies *welfare* or *well-being*.

After the Prayer for the Queen, we again

use THE COLLECT FOR THE DAY, with THE EPISTLE AND GOSPEL belonging to it. These Epistles and Gospels are choice portions of God's word, which have been specially selected as suitable readings for the day.

You have, I dare say, remarked that we set greater store by the Gospel than by the Epistle. And this we show by exclaiming, as soon as it is given out, "Glory be to thee, O God"; and further by standing up when it is read. Our reason for this is that the Gospels contain the very words of Christ Himself; and we wish to honour the words of the Master more than the words of His Servants.

Having read the GOSPEL, we remain standing, and then repeat THE NICENE CREED. This is one of the Three Creeds which have already been spoken of. It is somewhat fuller than the Apostles' Creed, but speaks in the same way of the Holy Trinity—of God the Father, and of God the Son, and of God the Holy Ghost.

Respecting *God the Son*, it declares that He is "God of God"; that is to say, He is

God Himself, and proceeded or came from God. He is also declared to be "light *of* light"; that is to say, He is the great Light of the World, and comes from Him who is also Light. He is likewise declared to be "very God *of* very God"; that is to say, truly and really God.

The last clause is much like that in the Apostles' Creed. You will observe that the Holy Ghost is here said to have "spoken by the Prophets." Thus then Holy Scripture is declared to be inspired, according to those words of St. Paul, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God"; and of St. Peter, "Holy men of God wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Here follows the SERMON. After which certain SENTENCES are read, whilst the Congregation are invited to give their "alms and oblations."

When this is over, the Minister says, "Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's Church Militant here on earth"; and then follows THE PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH MILITANT. You may not perhaps understand the mean-

ing of the word "militant." It means *war-ring* or *fighting*. A portion of Christ's Church or People are already at rest in heaven ; their warfare is over, and they have gained the victory through the blood of the Lamb. But another portion are now fighting the good fight of faith here below. They are in the midst of their struggle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Now, it is for these our Brethren that we are invited to pray : namely " for the Church Militant here on earth."

In this Prayer we intercede for a variety of Persons—for the Queen and her Counsellors ; for all in authority ; for Bishops and Clergymen ; for all God's people ; for our own Congregation, and for the Sick and Afflicted among them. And then lastly, we lift up our hearts in thankfulness to God for those who have died in His fear and love.

When we mention those " who have departed this life in God's faith and fear," you will observe we do not *pray for them*. We cannot pray for the dead ; but we can bless God for all those who have served Him here, and have now joined the Church Triumphant in His kingdom above.

When the Holy Communion is administered, a pause is usually made either before or after the Church Militant Prayer, to give those an opportunity of going out who do not desire to communicate. But it is sad that any break should be necessary. For why should not all (all at least who have been confirmed) partake of the best and most blessed portion of this Service? Why should any feel disposed to retire from Church when the Saviour's Table is spread? We are all Christians in name. We have all received a command to "do this in remembrance" of our Lord. We are all invited to the Feast. And who can tell how much those are losing who refuse so gracious an invitation? Who can tell the sin of thus cutting themselves off from Christ, and shutting themselves out from this means of grace, which He has so lovingly provided?

Why then is it that any one refuses? Ah, is it not that the conscience of many whispers that something is wanting in them? We are not altogether Christ's, or we should not for a moment hesitate to draw near to Him in this most heavenly Ordinance.

But if you know the blessedness of this

Service by often joining in it, I trust that I may be able to give you some little help, so that you may understand it even better, and see fresh beauties in it. May the time come, when instead of only here and there one being a regular communicant, there may be only here and there one in the congregation who cuts himself off from so great a blessing!

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE HOLY
COMMUNION.

WE now come to that part of the Service which belongs more especially to the *Administration* of the Holy Communion.

After the conclusion of the Prayer for the Church Militant, which we spoke of in the last chapter, the Congregation rise from their knees, and the Minister delivers an EXHORTATION to them, on the subject of that holy Sacrament which they are presently to partake of. He especially warns them against the sin of receiving it unworthily; that is, of receiving it carelessly, as if they were sitting down to a common feast. He tells them that by doing so they would eat and drink their own damnation or condemnation: they would obtain a curse, instead of a blessing; they

would offend God, instead of pleasing Him. Much of this is taken from what St. Paul says in 1 Cor. xi.

Twice in this Address “a *lively* faith” is spoken of. The word “lively” here signifies *living*. There is such a thing as a dead faith; but what we want, in order to be really worthy Communicants, is “a *lively* (or *living*) faith in Christ our Saviour.”

This is followed by another Exhortation, of a somewhat closer and more personal character, in which the Communicants are now invited to draw near to the Holy Table in a penitent, loving, obedient, and believing spirit, so that they may receive this holy Sacrament to the comfort of their souls.

Before doing so however, they are called upon to fall down upon their knees, and make their humble CONFESSION to God.

This CONFESSION, like that which is used in the Morning and Evening Service, is very full and comprehensive. It utters the language of hearts truly in earnest, mourning over their sins, and entreating God for Christ's sake to

grant them mercy and forgiveness. When speaking of our sins in this Confession, we declare that the "burden of them is *intolerable*." This is just what David felt, when he said, "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are *too heavy for me*." Ps. xxxviii. 4. Yes, this burden is *intolerable* to a truly penitent soul. Our sins are so "exceeding sinful" in our eyes, that we cannot endure the weight of them; and therefore we flee to Him who is the great sin-bearer, and cast them down before His cross, crying aloud for pardoning mercy for Jesus Christ's sake.

Immediately after the Confession a solemn ABSOLUTION is pronounced, declaring God's willingness to forgive those who "with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him"; and praying that He will fulfil His promise, by pardoning their past sin, delivering them from its power, strengthening them for His service, and leading them on to everlasting life.

And now, feeling that sin has been confessed, and forgiveness declared in Christ's

name, the Minister reads out some most encouraging Texts from Scripture. He calls them "comfortable words"; and truly they are fitted to give comfort and encouragement to every penitent Believer. They place before us our Lord's most gracious invitation to come to Him with all our burdens, to be relieved and refreshed by Him. They tell us of God's love, of the fulness of Christ's atonement, and of His willingness to save sinners.

Having thus cheered us with words spoken, as it were, from heaven itself, the Minister says to those gathered before him "Lift up your hearts"; to which they reply, "We lift them up unto the Lord." He then invites them to join him in the sweet work of Praise—"Let us give thanks unto our Lord God"; and they answer "It is meet and right so to do." And to this the Minister adds a few words, declaring that it is indeed meet and right to thank God for His great goodness.

After this, there is a special COLLECT, to be used on each of the Five great Festivals,

namely Christmas, Easter, Ascension Day, Whitsunday, and Trinity Sunday.

But on ordinary days these words immediately follow, "Therefore with Angels and Archangels, and with all the Company of heaven, we laud (that is, we praise) and magnify thy glorious name, &c."

Here is indeed a most thrilling and glorious outbreak of praise, which should come from the hearts of the whole Congregation. The Church on earth joins with the Church above in giving glory to God for His greatness and goodness.

These words of Praise being ended, we kneel down, and in deep self-abasement we acknowledge that we are unworthy to be guests at the Table of our Lord, or even to gather up the crumbs that fall from it. Nor can we dare to come to it, trusting in anything that we have done, but in His manifold and great mercies. Since however His "property (or character) is always to have mercy," we are encouraged to draw near. And we therefore pray that "we may so eat the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood, that our sinful bodies

may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood"; that is, that our outward and fleshly desires, the inclinations of our sinful bodies, and also our inward and spiritual feelings, may all be purified by feeding upon our Lord's Body and Blood, and by our closer union with Him in this Sacrament.

After this comes THE PRAYER OF CONSECRATION. And whilst offering it, the Minister takes the Bread which is before him, breaks it, and lays his hand upon it; thus setting it apart and consecrating it to the Lord; and the same with the Cup. And whilst so doing he repeats the Saviour's words, "Take, eat; this is my Body which is given for you: do this in remembrance of me." And again, "Drink ye all of this; for this is my Blood."

Let me explain two or three expressions in this Prayer. In the beginning of it the word "Oblation" is twice used—"who made there by his one *oblation* of himself once offered a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, *oblation*, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole

world." Now, the word "Oblation" means an *offering*. And so too in the Prayer for the Church Militant, we beseech God to accept "our alms and *oblations*," that is, our offerings.

Again, in the middle of the Prayer, we say, "Grant that we receiving these thy *creatures* of bread and wine, &c." Bread and Wine, and all other things that we see around us, are God's *creatures*. They are not of our making: they came from His hands. It is true that the Bread and Wine in the Lord's Supper are emblems or representations of Christ's broken Body, and of His poured out Blood; and in receiving them we feed by faith on Christ Himself. But still they are only Bread and Wine, God's *creatures*.

At the end of the Prayer we have the words of our Lord Himself, "This is my Body;" by which He seems to have meant, *This represents my Body*. And again, "This is my Blood of the New Testament," &c.; or in other words, "This is the *emblem or representation of my Blood*, which God has given for the cleansing of your souls, *according to that New Covenant* which He has made with you."

When the Clergymen, who are administering the Sacrament, have themselves received the Bread and Wine, the Congregation draws near to receive them also. And whilst we are taking into our mouths these sacred emblems of our Lord's Body and Blood, we should try and lift up our souls heavenwards, and feed upon Christ in our hearts by faith; for by thus receiving Him into our souls, we do indeed receive strength and refreshment.

When all have communicated, the Service goes on with THE LORD'S PRAYER. And then follow Two other Prayers, either of which may be used.

In the First of these, we beseech God to accept our sacrifice of Prayer and Praise; and to grant that we and all the members of the Church may obtain forgiveness of sins, and all the other blessings of Christ's atonement. And then we solemnly offer ourselves to God, our bodies and our souls, as a sacrifice to Him.

In the middle of the Prayer we beseech God that "all we who are partakers of this holy Communion may be *fulfilled* with his

grace and heavenly benediction." To be "fulfilled" with God's grace and blessing means to be *filled full*, or *entirely filled*, with them.

In the Second Prayer we express our thankfulness for having been permitted to feed on this spiritual food; namely, on Christ's Body and Blood, which we have received by faith. And we thank Him also for thus giving us a pledge and assurance that He does indeed look upon us as "very members incorporate in the mystical body of his Son"; that is, as true and real members of the spiritual Body of Christ. We further pray that, by His grace, we may continue in that holy fellowship, serving Him faithfully and truly all our lives.

Once more we strike the note of Praise, and pour forth a hearty and glorious Song of Thankfulness. We begin with the words uttered by the heavenly hosts on the plains of Bethlehem, "Glory to God on high, and in earth peace, goodwill towards men." And we thus express in most glowing words our thanks to God for what He is in Himself, and for what He has done for us.

This most beautiful and glorious Service closes with a parting blessing from God's Minister, "The peace of God which passeth all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord : and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always."

Here and elsewhere the People repeat aloud a solemn AMEN. And why is this ? The meaning of the word is *Verily*, or *So be it*. When we utter it at the end of a Prayer, it is as much as to say, "I give my hearty assent to what has been said ; let it be so, O my God." And by thus joining in the "Amen" each Person in the congregation makes the Prayer that has been offered *his own*.

Let me try and put this plainly before you.* You know that when a Law-paper is drawn up, several small seals are usually placed at the bottom of it. Each person, who pledges himself by that paper to do something, must sign his name ; and he puts

* See "Plain Sermons on the Liturgy," by the Rev. W. Champneys.

his finger on one of the seals, saying, "I deliver this as my act and deed." Thus what is promised in the Paper, by the several persons who sign it, is as effectually promised by each one of them, as if he had a separate Paper drawn out for himself alone.

Now, each Prayer which we use in Church is like a Paper of this kind containing a Petition to God. And everyone who wishes to share in the blessings asked in that Prayer must, as it were, set his own seal to it ; he must sign his own name to it ; or in other words, he must put his *Amen* to it ; and then *it becomes his own Prayer*. Every Prayer which goes up without your name, without your Amen, will bring no blessing on you who are silent, for you take no part in it. But every Prayer to which you fix your Amen, not only with the lip, but with the heart also, is like a parchment roll containing *your* petition. It mounts up to heaven, and will most assuredly bring down a gracious answer to each soul that joins in it.

Be sure then you take *your* part in each Prayer, whether repeated by the Clergyman alone, or by all together. An old Writer,

speaking of the early Christians, says, "They echo out the *Amen* like a clap of thunder." Let us be more hearty in our Amens, and thus show that we are all agreed, and that it is not the mere utterance of words, but that we mean what we say—that each person in the Church desires to make the Prayer his own.

We have in this and the foregoing Chapter carefully examined our Communion Office. It is the most heart-stirring of all our Services. A portion of it, as we have seen, is used on ordinary occasions when we are gathered in God's house ; but the whole is read whenever the holy Communion is administered. The Service does indeed breathe a calm peace and joy to the people of God, and also a spirit of deep humiliation for sin. It has been truly said, that if we desire to see sin in all its depth, we shall best see it in the cross of Christ. When the penitent Believer thinks of the Son of God suffering for sin, *then* it is that he sees the full evil of it, and feels his own unworthiness to be great beyond expression.

Now, it is just this spirit that our matchless Communion Service inspires. It humbles us in the dust, and at the same time it raises us up, uttering the language of hope and encouragement.

Oh that God may tune our hearts for this delightful Service, and give us increasing enjoyment every time we engage in it !

CHAPTER IX.

HINTS FOR A PROFITABLE USE OF
THE CHURCH SERVICES.

HAVING examined together the ordinary Services of the Church, I desire to offer you now a little counsel regarding our use of them. I shall give you Ten directions.

1. *Study the Prayers*, and try to understand them. They are full of meaning. It is sad to think how often we have used them, as if they were mere empty sounds and meant nothing. Henceforth let this be your Resolution, "I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray *with the understanding* also."

2. Before going to God's House, try and *get your mind into a serious and devout frame*. Sometimes this is not easy, and requires an

effort. "It is harder (says an old writer) to get the great Bell up, than to ring it when raised." And so it is with our hearts. Harder we shall find it to prepare them for the work of Prayer, than to pray when they are thus prepared. If we go into the House of God in an unprepared state, we shall have great difficulty to raise our hearts upwards. Worldly thoughts will trouble us, and worldly plans will come rushing into our minds, even though we desire to shut them out.

When you dress yourself for God's House, take care to get your heart ready also for His service. It would be better to go into the courts of the Lord in your working clothes, ruffled with your seven days' occupation, than to go there with a heart crammed, and disturbed, and fretted with earthly schemes and earthly anxieties.

Try to act upon my advice, and you will soon find a marked increase in your enjoyment of Public Worship. Ask God to give you His Holy Spirit; and so prepare you for the solemn work in which you are going to engage.

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can do neither of them rightly, unless God Himself prepares us. Then, remember to ask Him to tune your heart for His service, to awaken in you a hungering and thirsting for His truth, to give you a holy and devout frame, and to keep the world out of your heart.

3. When you enter church, think *whose House it is*. "Keep thy foot (says Solomon) when thou goest to the house of God." And the Lord Himself charges us, saying, "Reverence my sanctuary."

When, on one occasion, I went with some others to present a petition to the Queen in her palace, the moment we entered the room in which she was seated, every voice was hushed. Even to have whispered in her presence would have been out of place. How much more should this be the case, when we come to the Sanctuary of God, the presence-chamber of the great King!

The Jews of old, whenever they entered the Temple, felt that they were treading on holy ground. And so should we; for anything like lightness or worldliness or irreverence should be entirely put aside.

And during the whole time you are in God's House, try and *realize His presence*. Remind yourself every now and then that Christ is in the midst of His worshippers. Say to yourself, as Jacob did at Bethel, "Surely the Lord is in this place. This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." "I dare not trifle in His presence."

4. Before the Service begins, *offer up a silent prayer* from your very heart that God may make the season of Public Worship a blessing to you. And especially pray that you may be kept from wandering thoughts and worldly feelings.

A short time ago, a young man was buried, who belonged to a Church Choir in a neighbouring parish to my own. On his death-bed he was much troubled by the thought that he had so often allowed his mind to wander during Public Worship. And as one and another of his friends, and especially of his brethren in the choir, came to see him, he earnestly cautioned them to be very watchful over their own hearts in the House of

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God. We have all great need of this caution. Oh that it may not be lost upon us !

5. *Enter heartily into every part of the Service.* You remember, when the false Prophets of Baal offered up their sacrifice on the top of Mount Carmel, there was the altar, and the wood, and the bullock ; but there was no fire. But presently, when Elijah offered *his* sacrifice, the fire came down from heaven ; and so there went up a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour to God.

Oh let not *the Fire* be wanting in *your* sacrifice of Prayer and Praise. Ask God to send down His Spirit from above ; and then will yours be a true worship acceptable unto Him.

Throw yourself heartily into all the Prayers. Take *your* part in them, as well as your Minister. When you are called upon to join aloud, do so with much earnestness ; and in those Prayers in which you are directed to be silent, pray with your *heart* although not with your *voice*.

Do not fancy however that Prayer will come

without *an effort*. You must *try* to pray ; and then the Holy Spirit will “ help your infirmities,” and warm your heart with His own blessed presence.

6. When God’s Word is read, either in the Psalms or in the Lessons, or in the Epistle and Gospel, *hearken to it with seriousness and attention*. God would not only have us reverence *His Sanctuary*, but He would also have us reverence that *Word* which He has given us for our instruction. Receive it not “ as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”

7. If you can sing at all, *add your voice* in the Songs of Praise. The Choir of Singers in a church are Leaders to help the congregation, and not to take their place. It was never intended that they alone should sing, whilst the congregation listens ; but that all who are able should join. And as there is something in every hymn to raise our hearts, attend to the meaning of the words that are being sung, and you will find that

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8. When the Preacher enters the Pulpit, *pray for him*, that he may speak rightly ; and also *pray for yourself and for your Brethren*, that there may be a word in season for all, a word suited to your spiritual need. And as you sit and listen, say to yourself, " Now I am hearkening to God's message to me. Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

Listen with meekness, with teachableness, and with faith. And when the Sermon is ended, remember you have got to carry out the holy lessons which you have been taught. " Be ye *doers* of the word, and not *hearers only*, deceiving your own selves."

9. *Leave* God's Sanctuary, as you entered it, *with reverence*. Because the Service is over, do not forget *whose* House you are still lingering in, and *who* is still near you. It is better perhaps not to speak as long as we are within those walls ; or if we do, to take care that it is not on any light or trifling subject.

And as you walk home, be *watchful over*

your conversation. I know it is difficult, when our minds have been long on the stretch, to keep them still strung up. This perhaps is not necessary. But at the same time our conversation should be sober, and as becomes those who have just come from God's presence. And when you reach home, it is very desirable to try and call to mind, if you can, what you have just been hearing.

10. Look upon our Sabbath gatherings as *a preparation for heaven.* Our worship here below is to fit and prepare us for our worship *above.* If here it gives us no pleasure, no delight, no comfort, then alas! we are unfit for that holier and purer worship before the throne of God. If it is a weariness to us now, then our hearts must be altogether out of tune, and we cannot take our part with the choir of Angels in the heavenly temple.

Dear Reader, may the Holy Spirit come into your heart, and kindle in you the fire of true devotion! May it be your delight to unite with your brethren in prayer here on earth, so that you may join in the holier and happier work of praise hereafter!

PART THE THIRD.

THE OCCASIONAL SERVICES.

CHAPTER I.

THE PUBLIC BAPTISM OF INFANTS.*

You are, no doubt, aware that the Jews were commanded by God to bring their children, when eight days old, to be *circumcised*. They brought them to the Temple, and there solemnly dedicated them to the Lord. And most likely they had a special Service, which they used on such occasions.

When Christ came, He appointed another ordinance, namely *Baptism*, by which members were admitted into His Church. And there-

* There is also an Office for "the Public Baptism of such as are of *Riper Years*." And if you examine this Service, you will find that it is well suited to the solemn occasion of a Person coming to be baptized, who has hitherto neglected thus to enter into covenant with God.

fore, just as the Jews used to bring their little ones, and offer them at any early age to the Lord, in the appointed Ordinance of Circumcision, so we Christians bring our Infants, and consecrate them to the Lord's service by His own express Ordinance of Baptism.

Thank God such is our practice in these days, and such has been the practice in the Christian Church for hundreds and hundreds of years. We have in our Prayer-books a Service appointed to be used on these occasions. And now let us thoughtfully examine it.

The Service begins with the clergyman asking if the child has *already* been baptized. For if through illness, or any other cause, he has been baptized privately, then of course it would be wrong to baptize him again. And in that case we should use quite another Service;* for since he has been already bap-

* There is a Special Service provided for publicly receiving into the bosom of the Church those children who have been privately baptized. In that Service the Clergyman is directed to satisfy himself that the Child has been duly baptized. And then the Rubric says, "If the Minister shall find by the answers of such as bring the Child, that all things were done as

tized, all that is wanting is that he should now be *received into the congregation*.

If however the answer "No" is given, and he has not been already baptized in private, the service proceeds with AN ADDRESS from the Minister. In this Address he reminds the congregation of those words of Christ, which we find in St. John iii; "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." This passage is to show that we must be born again, both *inwardly* by the Holy Ghost, and also *outwardly* by the sprinkling of water; for our Lord requires *both*.

The Minister then goes on to beseech the congregation to ask a blessing on this Ordinance, and to pray that the child may be duly baptized with water and the Holy Ghost, and may be made a lively (or living) member of the Christian Church.

Two Prayers then follow. In the First we pray, that as God saved Noah and his family they ought to be; then shall he not christen the Child again, but *shall receive him as one of the flock of the true Christian people.*"

in the ark from perishing in the Flood, and as He led His people Israel through the Red Sea on their way to the Promised Land, so in like manner He would shelter this Child in the ark of His Church, and would bring him safely over the troubled waves of this world to the heavenly Canaan, there to dwell with Him for ever.

And further, since God did, by the baptism of His Son in the River Jordan, sanctify water for spiritual washing, we beseech Him in this holy Ordinance to wash and sanctify the Child now brought to Him.

In the next Prayer we entreat God to pardon and receive the Little One whom we bring to Him. And what need, you may ask, has one so young of *Pardon*? Great need; for we all brought sin with us into the world. "Behold (says David) I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." But what particular ground have we for asking this at *Baptism*? Look at Acts ii. 38. There you will see that pardon is connected with Baptism; for we find St. Peter saying to those who were aroused by the Sermon which he had just de-

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livered, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ *for the remission of sins*, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." So you see it was necessary that they should be *baptized*, in order to receive *pardon* and the gift of *the Holy Ghost*. You remember also that we say in our Creed, "I believe in one Baptism *for the remission of sins*."

Thus then we pray that the Child may be a pardoned and accepted Child. And we come to God in full assurance that our prayer will be heard; for we plead our Lord's own promise, "Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Then all stand up; and the Minister reads that beautiful passage from St. Mark's Gospel, which speaks of our blessed Lord receiving Little Children, taking them up in His arms, and blessing them.

And this is followed by a SHORT EXHORTATION full of encouragement. In it we are exhorted to believe that Jesus, though now in heaven, is still willing to receive little children,

to embrace them in the arms of His mercy, and to give them all the rich blessings of His kingdom.

At the end of it, the Minister exhorts the Congregation, saying, "Let us faithfully and devoutly give thanks unto God and say,

"Almighty and everlasting God, heavenly Father, we give thee humble thanks for that thou hast vouchsafed (that is, thou hast been pleased) to call us to the knowledge of thy grace, and faith in thee. Increase this knowledge, and confirm this faith in us evermore. Give thy Holy Spirit to this Infant, that he may be born again, and be made an heir of everlasting salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Then next, *an Address is given to the Godparents.*

The custom of having Godparents, or Sponsors, is a very ancient one. When the Person to be baptized is grown up, he can of course answer *for himself*; and then, as I have already remarked, we use a Service specially drawn up for the case of Adults. But an Infant can promise nothing for himself; and therefore

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some one is required to come forward, and act as his Surety, pledging himself that as the Child grows up he shall live and act as becomes a Christian, that he shall turn away from sin, and serve God faithfully and truly.

The Godparent promises this in faith. His hopes *may* be disappointed, and the Child may turn out badly. But still he promises it in hope, trusting that the Child may prove to be a Christian Child, and a true member of the Church.

The following Promises are required from each one of the Sponsors—

First, he is asked whether he will promise, in the Child's name, to renounce the devil and all things that are sinful.

To this he replies, "I renounce them all."

Secondly, whether he will promise for the Child to believe the leading truths of the gospel, as they are set forth in the Belief.

Again he answers "All this I stedfastly believe."

The Third question which the Minister asks is, whether the Child will be baptized in the Christian faith.

And the Sponsor, speaking *for* the Child, and as the Child's *mouthpiece*, says, "That is my desire."

His last question is, whether the Child will obey God, and keep His Commandments ; to which the Sponsor answers, still in the Child's name, "I will."

Some persons have hesitated whether they ought to make such solemn promises as these for any one. But it is in fact no more than we are constantly doing for one another.

For instance, when a man borrows a sum of money, or when he undertakes some high office, he is often required to bring one or more Sureties, who are bound for him. And these Sureties promise that he will repay the sum borrowed, or that he will rightly and honestly fulfil his office. The man *may* turn out to be dishonest. He may not pay the debt by the time it is due ; or he may abuse the trust committed to him. In such a case, should we say that the Surety spoke what was untrue, when he pledged himself ? Certainly not. He promised, as we say, in good faith, hoping that his Friend would do all that was

required. And so it is in Baptism. We promise for the Child, hoping, believing, expecting, that he will act rightly, and we bind ourselves to use every means in our power to induce him to do so.

Such then is the nature of our pledge as Godparents ; and such is the part we take in this service. And a most solemn duty has every sponsor to perform. There is much need that, ever after, he should pray without ceasing for his Godchild, that God would be pleased to bring him into the right path, and keep him by His almighty grace.

The Godfathers and Godmothers having given their promise, the Service proceeds with the offering up of *Four Short Prayers*.

The First is, " O Merciful God, grant that the old Adam in this Child (that is, the *old nature* which came to us from Adam) may be so buried, that the new man (or the new nature) may be raised up in him."

The next is, " Grant that all carnal affections may die in him, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in him."

The Third runs thus—"Grant that he may have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph against the Devil, the world, and the flesh."

And the Fourth—"Grant that whosoever is here dedicated to thee by our office and ministry (that is, everyone who is baptized) may be endued with heavenly virtues and everlastingly rewarded, through thy mercy, O blessed Lord God, who dost live and govern all things, world without end."

And now comes the CONSECRATION PRAYER. We ask God, whose dear Son did shed out of His precious side both water and blood, and who Himself commanded us to be baptized—we ask Him to hearken to the Prayers of His People, and to bless the water that we are going to use; "Sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sin" (that is, Grant that this water used in baptism may be for the washing away of the Child's sin, and for the cleansing of his soul). And we further pray that he may be filled with God's grace, and be numbered among His elect (or chosen) children.

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Then, taking the Infant into his arms, the Clergyman baptizes it in the name of the holy Trinity, according to the command of our Lord, “Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

And he also adds, “We receive this child into the congregation of Christ’s flock, and do sign him with the sign of the cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ’s faithful soldier and servant unto his life’s end.”

What a beautiful and solemn ceremony! We pour water on the child, in token of Christ’s inward washing; and we sign the cross upon his forehead, in token that henceforth he shall become a valiant Soldier in Christ’s army, and a faithful Servant in His household.

And now that this Little One is baptized, is admitted into Christ’s Church, and is enlisted into His army, as it were, a few more words only are needed to complete the Service.

The Minister calls upon the People to unite

with him in prayer and praise ; “ Seeing now, dearly beloved Brethren, that this child is regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ’s Church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits, and with one accord make our prayers unto Him, that this Child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning.”

There is one expression here which needs explanation. We declare that the child who has been baptized is now *regenerate*. Certainly this cannot mean that his heart and nature are changed ; for Scripture does not lead us to expect so great a change at Baptism. But it means rather that the Child is now placed in a high and holy condition. He is not, as he was before baptism, “ a child of wrath ;” but he is now “ a child of grace.” He is grafted into the true Vine. He is brought within God’s covenant. He is placed under the influence of the Holy Spirit, within the very arms of Christ ; and he is henceforth to be numbered among God’s family. This is what we mean, when we speak of the Child as *regenerate*.

We now offer up the LORD’S PRAYER, which is especially suitable for this occasion, when

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we come to God as our Father, bringing our Little One to Him.

And then we put up another Prayer, thanking God for having regenerated the Child, brought it near to Himself, and numbered it among His adopted ones. And we further beseech Him to grant, that the Child may die unto sin, and live unto God, crucifying the old man (or the old nature), and leading such a holy life, as becomes one who is now an heir, or inheritor, of heaven.

The Service closes with a few farewell words to the Sponsors, telling them what their duty is; namely, to remind their God-child how solemn a vow has been made for him; and to see that he is instructed in the Christian faith, and brought up to lead a godly and a Christian life.

They are further charged to take care that the child is prepared for Confirmation at the proper age.

I trust you will feel it good to have had your attention called to this Service.

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It is good for *Parents* to know what it is they pray for, when they bring their children to be baptized, and how great the blessings are which belong to this ordinance.

It is good for *Sponsors* to see what a solemn and important duty theirs is, that they may in future come in a more devout and prayerful spirit. The office of Sponsorship is not a mere form, but a most responsible and useful office, and one that may prove to be a great blessing to the child for whom they stand.

And it is good for *us all* to be reminded of our Baptism; what sacred vows we have made, and to what a high standing we have been raised. We have been dedicated to Christ. We have been sworn in, as it were, as His soldiers. We have been numbered among His people. What manner of persons then ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness! Truly, if we are living an ungodly or a careless life, great will be our condemnation. For how shall we escape—we who have been baptized—we who are Christians by profession—if we neglect so great salvation?

CHAPTER II.

THE ORDER OF CONFIRMATION.

OUR Church is not content with receiving Infants into the number of her Flock ; but she also provides that, when they reach a sufficient age, they should be brought to the Bishop, to be confirmed and blest by him.

At Baptism their Godparents made certain promises *for them* ; and now having arrived at years of discretion, they are required to come forward, and declare *with their own mouth* their willingness to abide by these promises.

In order to prepare them for this Ordinance, a Catechism has been drawn up, which contains instruction on those subjects which are especially needful for all who are to be confirmed.

And now let us look into THE CONFIRMATION SERVICE, as we have it in our Prayer-book.

The Ceremony is called

CONFIRMATION, OR LAYING ON OF HANDS.

The Candidates having been duly prepared and approved by their Clergyman, and being now assembled in the Church, the Service begins with a SHORT ADDRESS from the Bishop, in which he explains what Confirmation is—

“To the end that Confirmation may be ministered to the more edifying of such as shall receive it, the Church has thought good to order that none hereafter shall be confirmed,* but such as can say the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Ten Commandments ; and can also answer to such other questions as in the Short Catechism are contained ; which order (or direction) is very convenient to be observed, to the end that children being now come to the years of discretion, and having learnt what their Godfathers and Godmothers pro-

* In the early Christian Church it was customary to administer the Rite of Confirmation almost immediately after Baptism. But our Church has wisely deferred it until the Child shall have arrived at a riper age.

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mised for them in Baptism, they may themselves with their own mouth and consent, openly before the Church, ratify and confirm the same ; and also promise that by the grace of God they will evermore endeavour themselves faithfully to observe such things as they by their own confession have assented unto."

The Bishop then puts to the Candidates a Question—not a string of questions, but one simple question—simple, but most deeply important—"Do you here, in the presence of God, and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your Baptism ; ratifying and confirming the same in your own persons, and acknowledging yourselves bound to believe and to do all those things which your Godfathers and Godmothers then undertook for you ?"

To this Question each one answers, "I do."

The answer is short and easily uttered. But how much does it contain ! It is as much as to say, "I have thought upon those solemn promises which were made for me,

when I was too young to promise for myself. But now I declare openly, before my assembled brethren, that I am determined with God's help to keep them. And I hereby promise that I will indeed renounce all sin, and everything that belongs to the Devil; that I will shun all the pomps and vanity of a wicked world; and that I will resist the evil workings of my own fleshly nature. In short, having counted the cost, I am willing to give myself up to the service of Christ."

The Candidates having all given their answers, the Bishop and the Congregation put up the following Short Sentences of Prayer; "Our help is in the name of the Lord"; "Who hath made heaven and earth." "Blessed be the name of the Lord"; "Henceforth world without end." "Lord, hear our prayers"; "And let our cry come unto thee."

The Bishop then reads the following Prayer, in which he pleads for those now before him; "Almighty and everlasting God, who hast vouchsafed (or been pleased) to regenerate these thy servants by water and the Holy

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Ghost (that is, at their Baptism), and hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins; strengthen them, we beseech thee, O Lord, with the Holy Ghost the Comforter, and daily increase in them thy manifold gifts of grace, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength (that is *spiritual* strength), the spirit of knowledge and true godliness; and fill them, O Lord, with the spirit of thy holy fear, now and for ever."

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All who are to be confirmed are then ranged in order before the Bishop; and he performs the ceremony of Confirmation, laying his hands upon each of them, after the manner of the Apostles. And whilst doing so, he repeats these words, "Defend, O Lord, this thy Child (or this thy servant) with thy heavenly grace, that he may continue thine for ever; and daily increase in thy holy Spirit more and more, until he come unto thy everlasting kingdom."

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This is a most solemn act. And whilst it is being performed, those who are receiving the Bishop's blessing should indeed pray very

earnestly that God would pour down *His* blessing also upon them, confirming and strengthening their good resolutions, and enabling them to yield themselves wholly and entirely to Him for the rest of their lives.

And every person present should also plead for them, entreating God to help them, and to make this holy Ordinance a blessing to them.

When all have been confirmed, the Bishop says, "The Lord be with you;" and the Congregation answer, "And with thy spirit."

Then all falling upon their knees repeat the Lord's Prayer: after which Two Collects or Short Prayers are offered.

In the First Collect the Bishop prays for those who have just been confirmed; "Almighty and everlasting God, who makest us both to will and to do those things that be good and acceptable unto thy Divine Majesty; we make our humble supplications unto thee for these thy servants, upon whom after the example of the holy Apostles we have now laid our hands, to certify them (or *assure* them) by this sign of thy favour and gracious

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goodness towards them. Let thy fatherly hand, we beseech thee, ever be over them ; let thy Holy Spirit ever be with them, and so lead them in the knowledge and obedience of thy word, that in the end they may obtain everlasting life ; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who with thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth ever one God world without end."

The Second Collect is more general. It is a Prayer which includes the whole Congregation. We ask God in it to direct us in all our ways, and to protect us at all times ; "O Almighty Lord, and everlasting God, vouchsafe, we beseech thee, to direct, sanctify, and govern both our hearts and bodies, in the ways of thy laws and in the works of thy commandments ; that through thy most mighty protection both here and ever, we may be preserved in body and soul ; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

The Bishop then gives his parting Blessing, and the Service ends.

It is usual, at some time during the Ser-

vice, for the Bishop to address the Young Persons who are assembled. And his words should be received with special reverence, as coming from him who is not only God's Minister, but also our spiritual Father. We should greatly respect him on account of his high and holy office, and listen with meek attention to his wise counsel.

Such is the ceremony of Confirmation; and a most solemn and important Ceremony it is. It is an ordinance which our Church insists upon, for Four reasons.

First, Because there was a like Ceremony in the Jewish Church. We are told that Jewish Children, at the age of Thirteen, were brought to the House of God, in order to be publicly examined: and if approved, they were then declared to be *Children of the Precept*. This name was given to them from their making a solemn promise to observe the *precepts* and laws of Moses.

Secondly, Because if we look into the Acts of the Apostles, we shall see that a kind of Confirmation was practised by the Apostles. In Acts viii. 14—17, and xix. 5, 6, we are

told that they *laid their hands* on those who *had been baptized*. This was in order that they might receive some *further* gifts of God's grace, and be more fully strengthened by His Holy Spirit. Here then was a practice very like our Confirmation, though not quite the same thing.

Thirdly, Because we learn that after the death of the Apostles the Ordinance of Confirmation was observed; and those who had been baptized were afterwards confirmed.

Fourthly, Because, even if there was no scriptural authority for Confirmation, it is indeed a most useful and profitable Ordinance; and therefore one which the Church might well recommend for the benefit of her spiritual Children. It has proved a blessing to thousands; and many a serious person has looked back upon it as the season when he first heartily entered upon God's service.

CHAPTER III.

THE SOLEMNIZATION OF MATRIMONY.

BEFORE examining this Service, there are one or two points on which it is well to touch.

In order to prevent improper marriages, the Church orders that the names of the Persons shall be read out in Church on three several Sundays beforehand. When this is not done the law directs that a Certificate be produced, which can be obtained on payment of a certain sum.

One or the other having been done, and no objection having been raised, the Clergyman is at liberty to perform the Service.

Within the last few years a new law has been passed, allowing marriages to take place simply by making a Declaration before the Registrar. But surely no right-minded person would ever dream of being married after this

fashion. It is true that such a union would be good in the eye of the *law* ; but it would be most offensive to God. And indeed we should feel *that* to be but a poor marriage, which took place without even asking God's blessing. None, I should think, but unbelievers, or those who had reason to be ashamed of the step they were taking, would resort to such an ungodly and unchristian act.

The Marriage Service in the Church of England is indeed a noble Service ; and I am sure that the more we examine it, the more we shall be struck with its beauty and fitness.

The Persons to be married being assembled with their Friends, A GENERAL ADDRESS is given to all who are present.

In this opening Address marriage is spoken of as an honourable state, instituted or appointed by God Himself, in those early days when Adam and Eve were in the garden of Eden, and before they had sinned against God.

It is spoken of too as a kind of emblem of that still higher union, which exists be-

tween Christ and His Church ; for you will remember that He is set before us in Scripture as the Bridegroom, and His people are spoken of as His Bride.

Marriage is further declared to be a state of life, which Christ owned and blest by being Himself present at a marriage in Cana of Galilee, mentioned in John ii., where He wrought His first miracle of turning water into wine. And again it is spoken of as a state specially commended by St. Paul in his Epistles.

For these reasons we are reminded that it is not to be undertaken lightly or carelessly, but “reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God,” and then *Three Causes* are given *why* matrimony was ordained—

First, that children might be born, and brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the glory of His name.

Secondly, to avoid sin, which certainly would abound, if there was no such thing as holy Matrimony.

And Thirdly, that Husbands and Wives might be a help and comfort to each other,

bearing one another's burdens, and strengthening one another in the ways of God.

At this part of the Service, a last opportunity is given, if any one has reason to believe that the Persons present cannot be lawfully joined together. And if so, the accuser is invited to speak, or else "hereafter for ever to hold his peace."

Then, turning to the Man and Woman, the Clergyman solemnly addresses them, and charges them before God, if they themselves know any reason why they should not be united, even now to say so; for if all be not right in His sight, then, although they may be duly married, it were better, far better, that the ceremony had never taken place.

If however no objection is made, then the Minister says to the Man, "Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded Wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour, and keep her, in sickness and in health; and forsaking all other, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live?"

This is so plain a question, that it need

no explanation. On the Answer being given, the Clergyman turns to the Woman, and puts to her nearly the same question.

And then he requires a *Pledge* from both. The Man's pledge runs thus; "I take thee to my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part" (that is, till death parts us). And he adds, "And thereto I give thee my *troth*."

What does this mean? "*Troth*" is a word not often used in the present day. It signifies an *oath* or *pledge*. And here the Man and Woman each give a solemn pledge, that they will be faithful and true to one another. When they say then, "Thereto I plight thee, or give thee, my *troth*," they in fact say, "I give thee my solemn *pledge*, or I pledge my solemn word to thee, that I will do all that I have just been promising."

You will observe that the promise made by the *Woman* is much the same as that made by the *Man*, excepting that she promises also to *obey* him. This is what the word of God requires; for St. Paul says, "As the Church

is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." And St. Peter sets before wives the example of Sarah in this respect; "Even as Sarah *obeyed* Abraham."

In *some* countries, the Wife is required to pay almost a *slavish* obedience to her Husband. But not so among ourselves. A tender, loving, and cheerful obedience is required of her, and a due submission to that authority which God has given to the Husband.

Having made these promises, and given these pledges to each other, the Man places THE RING on the Minister's Book, and receives it again from him, blest as it were by his hands. He then puts it on the Woman's finger, repeating these words while he does so, "With this Ring I thee wed (that is, I put on thee this Ring, in token that I take thee as my Wife). With my body I thee worship (that is, I desire to pay thee all outward love and reverence); and with all my worldly goods I thee endow (that is, I make thee a sharer in all that I possess)."

The word "worship" usually signifies the offering of prayer to God. But here it has quite a different meaning. It signifies the honour and respect which we pay to a fellow-creature whom we esteem. If you look at Dan. ii. 46, you will see that King Nebuchadnezzar is said to have *worshipped* Daniel; that is, to have honoured him, and paid him respect. And this too is the meaning of the words here used. "With my body I thee *worship*." See also Luke xiv. 10.

Then all devoutly kneeling, a Prayer is offered, in which we ask God, that as He blest the married life of Isaac and Rebecca, so He may bless these Persons, and enable them faithfully to keep the vows they have made (of which the Ring is a token and pledge), and live together lovingly and happily in obedience to His laws.

The Priest or Minister then joins their hands together, saying, "Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

The principal part of the Ceremony is now over; and the Minister addresses the people,

saying; "Forasmuch as these persons have consented together in holy wedlock, and have witnessed the same before God and this company, and thereto have given and pledged their troth either to other, and have declared the same by giving and receiving of a Ring and by joining of hands, I pronounce that they be man and wife together, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

And he adds this blessing, "God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost bless, preserve, and keep you. The Lord mercifully with his favour look upon you; and so fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace, that ye may so live together in this life, that in the world to come ye may have life everlasting."

A Psalm chosen for the purpose is then read. And when this is ended, the Married Pair again kneel down, and the Lord's Prayer is offered with a few short Petitions both before and after it.

Three other Prayers follow.

In the First Prayer, God is addressed as the

God who blest Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and He is asked also to bless His Two Servants now on their knees before Him, that they may be happy in serving Him, and may be alway kept in safety under His protecting care.

In the next Prayer, we ask God to give the blessing of children; and if so, to grant that they may be brought up as Christians, in His fear and love.

The Third Prayer is a most spiritual one. It rises very high. We speak in it of God having originally knitted together, as it were, our First Parents; thus showing that it can never be lawful to put asunder those whom He by Matrimony has made one. We speak too of Marriage as a great and holy mystery, representing the spiritual marriage betwixt Christ and His Church. And then we beseech Him to look favourably on His Two Servants now before Him, and to grant that they also may love each other, as Christ loved His Church, and as the Church loves her Lord. And we ask Him to bless them both, and grant them to inherit His everlasting kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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The Priest then gives his blessing; "Almighty God, who at the beginning did create our first parents, Adam and Eve, and did sanctify and join them together in Marriage; Pour upon you the riches of his grace; sanctify and bless you; that ye may please him both in body and soul, and live together in holy love unto your lives' end."

The Service sometimes ends here. But there is a scriptural ADDRESS provided, which ought to be read, whenever there is a Congregation assembled. This address is upon the subject of Marriage generally, and especially on the duty both of Husbands and Wives.

You will notice that in the Rubric, or Short Direction, at the end, we are told, "It is convenient (or right) that the new-married Persons should receive the Holy Communion at the time of their marriage, or at the first opportunity after their marriage."

Of late years this most desirable and Christian practice has been in a great measure restored. It is not at all unusual in these days for the Holy Communion to be



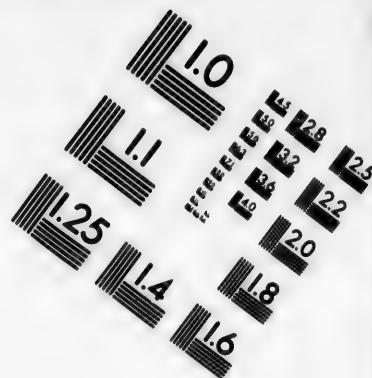
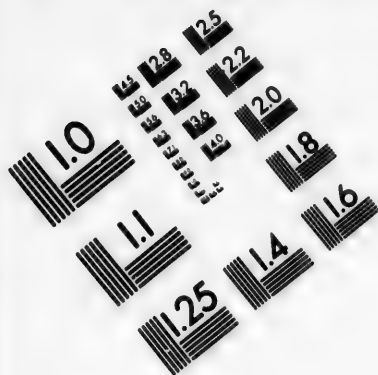
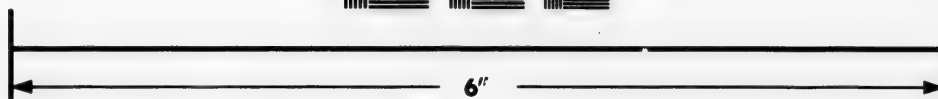
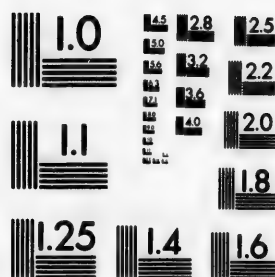


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administered immediately after the Marriage Service. And certainly it is most important that those who are really married *in the Lord*, and who look on marriage as perhaps the most solemn and important act in their lives, should draw near to the Lord's Table, either on the very day, or on the next opportunity.

And now, my dear Reader, if you are already married, look upon your union, not as something that has taken place for your worldly convenience or advantage, but as a holy Ordinance, in which God Himself has linked you together by a bond that nothing can break; no, not even death itself. Try and live, not for yourselves, but for one another. Try to please each other, to comfort each other, to help each other on the thorny path of life. Try to ease one another's burdens, to share one another's sorrows, and to cheer one another's hearts. Try to walk together in the happy road that leads to heaven.

Or if you are at present unmarried, but hope one day to enter upon this state, beware of taking a low, carnal, worldly view of it.

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Let there be no lightness, or anything wrong or unseemly in your intercourse before marriage. Let yours be a pure marriage, one on which you can heartily ask God's highest blessing. Let it be begun, continued, and ended in Him, so that you may come to God's house with a holy, happy confidence, that He will lift up the light of His countenance upon you, and that you may be able boldly to ask your Minister's blessing in the name of the Lord.

Above all, let each of us seek after that *higher* union, which the Prayer-book speaks of, and which the Bible sets forth between Christ and His people.

If we would be with Christ hereafter, we must be united to Him now : we must be One with Him—He the Vine, and we the Branches—He the Bridegroom, and we the Bride. We must, each one of us, live close to Him, as the Ivy clings around the tree, and lives upon it. For was not this the Saviour's Prayer for His People ; "that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee ; that they may be one in us ?"

O happy union ! Blessed are they who are one with Christ, and Christ with them ; who enjoy *now* His presence and His love, and will be with Him for ever hereafter ! “Blessed are they that are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb !”

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CHAPTER IV.

THE VISITATION OF THE SICK—THE COMMUNION OF THE SICK.

IN visiting the Sick, the Ministers of our Church have full liberty to use THE VISITATION SERVICE, or not, as they may think expedient. There are of course many cases, for which no one Form could be altogether suitable ; and therefore they often feel it well to frame their own Prayers, and choose their own portions of Scripture, according to the particular wants of the Persons whom they are called to visit. But there *is* a Service prepared for them, if they see well to use it ; and it contains Prayers, which a Clergyman may read with profit in any Sick Chamber.

The OPENING WORDS of it are very beautiful. The Clergyman begins by saying,

"Peace be to this house, and to all that dwell in it." This is in keeping with our Lord's direction to His seventy disciples, as we have it in Luke x.; "Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it."

Then there are sundry PRAYERS for mercy, and also for help and defence against our great spiritual enemy. God is asked to sanctify and bless His fatherly visitation to the Person afflicted; so that, if he recovers, he may live to His glory; or, if he dies, God may take him into His own presence to dwell with Him for ever.

These Prayers are followed by AN EXHORTATION, in which the Sick Person is assured that his illness is sent by God, and that it is intended either to try his patience and quicken his faith, or else to correct and amend something that is wrong in him: and that whatever be God's aim, if he takes his chastisement rightly, it will turn to his profit, and help him forward on the way to heaven.

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larly called to those words of St. Paul, which we find in Heb. xii. ; " Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastisement, God dealeth with you as with sons ; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not ? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh, and we gave them reverence ; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live ? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure ; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."

The truths here set forth are then enlarged upon, and pressed home with all earnestness.

The Sick Person is now urged to examine his own heart and life ; so that, being convinced of sin, he may seek mercy from his heavenly Father for Christ's sake. And to help him in this examination, his attention is directed to the Apostles' Creed ; and he is solemnly questioned as to whether he believes the various points contained in it.

He is further invited to unburden his mind, and confess any sins of which he may feel guilty. But you will observe that the Confession, which he is here encouraged to make, is very different from that *forced* Confession, which the Roman Catholic Church requires of every person before receiving the holy Communion. *This* Confession is quite voluntary and optional; and is only urged in case the conscience is overburdened with some matter, in which confession would afford relief.

A FORM of ABSOLUTION is also provided; but only those are declared to be pardoned who truly repent and believe in Christ. You will observe too that this pardon comes from the Lord Himself. The Minister only declares it *in God's name*, and by His authority. Cases may arise, in which this declaration of forgiveness is calculated to soothe and comfort a penitent and troubled heart.

Immediately after this comes A PRAYER, in which we beseech God to look with mercy on the contrite sinner before Him; to renew him

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in those points wherein he has failed ; to keep him in the true faith ; to look mercifully upon his pain, and tears, and contrition, releasing him from the chain of his sins, and strengthening him with His Holy Spirit. And all this for His dear Son's sake.

A PSALM is here provided to be read ; and the one chosen is the Seventy-first. This is a Psalm in which David declares his trust and confidence in the Lord, and prays that he may never be cast off or forsaken.

At the end of this Psalm a very short PRAYER, a kind of ejaculation, is made ; "O Saviour of the world, who by thy cross and precious blood hast redeemed us, save us and help us, we humbly beseech thee, O Lord."

Then the Minister commends the Sick Person to God, saying, "The Almighty Lord, who is a most strong tower to all them that put their trust in him, be now and evermore thy defence ; and make thee know and feel that there is none other name under heaven given to man, in whom and through whom

thou mayest receive health and salvation, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Service closes with THE BLESSING of Moses, which we find in Num. vi.; "Unto God's gracious mercy and protection we commit thee. The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace both now and evermore."

A few ADDITIONAL PRAYERS are also given at the end, suited to particular cases. One is for a *Sick Child*. Another when there seems but *little hope of recovery*. A third for one *at the point of death*. And a fourth for any one *troubled in conscience*.

The whole forms a very fit Service to be read in a Sick Room. The Church, as I have already said, intends that her ministers should use it or not as they feel disposed. But by placing it in our Prayer-book she shows that she cares for her sick members, and does not forget them in their hour of need.

THE SERVICE FOR THE COMMUNION OF THE SICK, which follows next in the Prayer-book, is the same as our ordinary Communion Service, excepting that it is considerably shortened; and a Collect is added, and two very short portions of Scripture, making a kind of Epistle and Gospel, suited to the condition of a Sick Person.

Let me here say a word or two about receiving the Holy Communion in a time of Illness.

This most blessed Ordinance was never intended for those Persons who, in the days of their strength, turned away Sunday after Sunday from the Lord's Table, and refused to obey His gracious command to "do this in remembrance" of Him. It was never intended that it should be given to *such* in a dying hour, to make up, as it were, for years of past neglect.

And yet how many ask for this holy Sacrament on a death-bed, who never cared about it before. A person feels perhaps at such a time uneasy about his spiritual state. Conscience tells him that he has neglected

many plain Christian duties, and *this* perhaps among the number. And just as a drowning man grasps at a straw as it floats by, so the dying man, as a last hope, desires to receive this blessed ordinance, which in time past he, again and again, so sinfully refused. It never, I say, was intended for such.

But for the real Christian, for the true Believer, for those who have loved to come to the Lord's Table in the days of their health, and are now brought low by sickness—for *them* is this PRIVATE COMMUNION especially intended. And in the hour of weakness and suffering, great is the comfort, and sweet the refreshment, which they receive in thus feeding upon the Saviour's Body and Blood, which they so much need for the strengthening and refreshing of their souls.

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CHAPTER V.

THE CHURCHING OF WOMEN.

It is the duty of Christians to be thankful. There should be a large mixture of Praise and Thanksgiving in our private, everyday devotions. But there are some *special* occasions, when it becomes a servant of God to give utterance to a thankful heart in public *before the congregation*.

Recovery from the pain and peril of Child-birth is one of these occasions; and our Church has provided a special Service suitable for it.

It was formerly the custom to read this Service just before the Communion Office. But now it is usually read before the General Thanksgiving, at Morning or Evening Prayer.

It begins with a SHORT ADDRESS from

the Clergyman ; “ Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of His goodness to give you safe deliverance, and hath preserved you in the great danger of childbirth, you shall therefore give hearty thanks unto God and say ”—

Then follows either the 116th, or the 127th, Psalm, which the woman ought to repeat with the Minister. The first of these Psalms is a song of thankfulness to God for delivering us from all our dangers and troubles. It also expresses a resolution to show forth His praise by living to Him from henceforth. The other is a plain declaration that without God’s blessing all is in vain ; that we may toil, and strive, and labour, but to no purpose unless He is with us. And towards the end of the Psalm, there is an acknowledgment that for all our family mercies we are indebted to Him.

The First Psalm seems to refer more to the pain and peril, which the mother has herself passed through : the Second to the blessing of a Child being born into the world.

Then comes the LORD’S PRAYER ; without which no Service can be complete.

After this, SIX VERSICLES, or Short Petitions, are offered by the Minister and People; and then a closing Prayer. In these we ask God to support, strengthen, and save the Woman who is returning thanks. We give hearty praise to God for having so graciously spared her; and we ask that, through His help, she may be enabled faithfully to serve Him here, and partake of His glory hereafter.

Some persons I know have felt a little backwardness in thus coming forward *publicly* to offer their thanksgivings to God. They have shrunk from a Service which makes them for the moment marked persons in the congregation. I can quite understand this feeling; but I am sure it is one that ought to be resisted. For what can be more right, than that, on an occasion when God's mercy has been graciously bestowed, the Person so blest should render her warmest thanks in the midst of the congregation. The Jewish Mother went gladly into the Temple, to offer there her sacrifice of praise; and even she who was the most honoured Mother

of all, Mary the Virgin Mother, did this. And shall the Christian Mother be less grateful, or shrink back from thus openly acknowledging God's goodness to her?

Take a higher view of this act of Praise. Look upon it as a solemn, sacred, happy duty; for thus it becometh well the just to be thankful.

Two things are mentioned in *the Rubric* at the end. One is that the Woman who comes to return thanks should make *an Offering*. This offering is made to God's Minister, as a token of thankfulness for mercies received. We find that such too was the custom in the Jewish Church. See what is said in Lev. xii. 6, 8; "And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtle dove. And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles or two young pigeons. And the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean." This should be looked upon then not as a *Fee* demanded; but as a *sacred Offering* which is pleasing to God.

But there is yet another and a better offering, which the Woman is recommended to make; "If there be a Communion, it is convenient that she receive the holy Communion." Thus she may offer herself, her soul and body, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto God. This is the most solemn and acceptable way of praising Him for His mercies; and it is a means of surrendering to His service the life which He has so graciously spared.

It is remarkable on how many occasions the Holy Communion comes in as the great means of dedicating ourselves to the Lord, and of seeking from Him that grace which we so much require, to enable us to live in His holy fear and love. Our Church expects us to receive it after our Confirmation, as a sign of our membership; on the occasion of Marriage, to bind us closely to our Lord; when a Mother returns thanks; and also in the days of Sickness, to cheer us in our gloom, and to strengthen us in our weakness.

May this show us more than ever how much we lose by shutting ourselves out from this

most important ordinance! Surely this holy Sacrament is not to be thought of for the first time on a sick bed, or merely once or twice in our lives. It is to be partaken of and enjoyed *frequently*. It is an ordinance that we should be ever ready to receive for the nourishing and comforting of our souls. It is never out of place—neither in the days of health, nor of Sickness—neither in the time of joy, nor in the hour of sadness.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD.

THIS is perhaps the most striking and affecting of all our Services. It contains words, which will one day be read over you and me; and which we have perhaps already heard read over more than one of our own beloved Relations.

Among the various nations of the earth we find different customs as regards the Dead. In ancient times it used to be the habit of some to burn the bodies of their friends, and then carefully to preserve their ashes. But the practice of burying in the earth seems to have been the most common. We read in the Bible of the Patriarchs of old burying their dead in graves dug in the ground, or hewn out of the rock. And such too has always been the custom among Christians.

I am thankful that, in this Country at least,

great respect is paid to the dead. We know of course that *they themselves* are none the better for the honour we give to their remains. But still we love to reverence them, remembering that their Bodies were once the temples of the Holy Ghost, and remembering too that our blessed Lord Himself was pleased to take our nature upon Him, and to be clothed in our flesh.

Indeed we may gather from Scripture that affection and respect shown to the Dead are well pleasing to God. The account in the Gospels of those faithful and devoted disciples, who laid the Saviour in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea; and the special praise that is given by our Lord to that pious Woman, who did not grudge three hundred pennyworth of spikenard to annoint his body beforehand for the burial; the mention of these is enough to show us that a decent attention to the Dead, and a loving regard for them, is right in His sight.

The BURIAL SERVICE of the Church of England is specially framed for those who have *died in the Lord*. It is full of joyful

hope; and is therefore perhaps hardly suited to the case of those who have not been His true servants. It would have been almost impossible however to have framed a Service for the careless and ungodly. And therefore those who drew it up, seem to have had specially in their minds those who have served God faithfully here, and have departed in His faith and love. In the case of such how full it is of comfort, and we can indeed set our seal to every word contained in it. But when it is read over one, about whom we have little or no hope, *then* it seems almost out of place; and the Clergyman must read it, and the People listen to it, with sad and painful misgivings.

Thank God however, we are not called upon to judge our Brother; and therefore we may think the best, and hope the best, concerning him. His everlasting state is in the hands of God, and we must leave it there. But we *may* hope, and we *will* hope, for the best. It is with this feeling that we use the words contained in our Burial Service, though in some cases it may be hard, very hard, to use them.

Now let us turn to the Service, as it stands in our Prayer Book.

If you look at the Rubric at the beginning, you will see that there are three Classes of Persons whom we are *forbidden* to bury.

1st. Those who die *unbaptized*. For since they have never been received as members of Christ's Church, we are not allowed to give them Christian burial.

2ndly. Those who have been *excommunicated*; that is, cast out of Christ's Church.

3dly. Those who have *laid violent hands upon themselves*; that is, those who have wilfully committed self-murder.

But now for the Service itself.

There is something peculiarly solemn in the Funeral Procession halting at the gate of the Churchyard, and pausing there for a moment before entering the consecrated ground. Meanwhile the Clergyman comes forth from the House of God, and meets it at the threshold of the Burying Ground; and then leads the procession, walking slowly before it, and uttering holy SENTENCES, full of godly comfort and of Christian hope.

He begins with those glorious words, which

our Lord Himself spoke at the grave of Lazarus; "I am the resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Next he repeats those words of faith and hope which Job uttered; "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

Then, as he comes to the Church door, he exclaims, "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

When all are within the Church a PSALM is read, either the Thirty Ninth or the Ninetieth; *one* of these Psalms being more suited to the case of a Young Person; the *other* to one advanced in years.

A LESSON is also read, taken from 1 Cor. xv. And no portion of holy Scripture could have been chosen more fitting for such a time, when Death, and what is beyond Death, is uppermost in our minds.

The reading of this Psalm and Lesson is not intended of course to be of any benefit to the *dead*, but for the instruction and comfort of the *living*; to bring Death before their minds, and raise their thoughts upward and onward to that time, when "death shall be swallowed up in victory."

On leaving the Church, the Procession moves to the spot prepared for the burial. And there, by the open grave, the Clergyman gives utterance to the following MEDITATION: "Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower. He fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay. In the midst of life we are in death: of whom may we seek for succour but of Thee, O Lord, who for our sins are justly displeased?"

And then he breaks out into a fervent Prayer, that God would spare us from the bitter pains of eternal death, and not suffer us at our last hour to fall away from Him.

Next follows a very touching and affecting ceremony. The Body is lowered into the grave;

and then *a handful of earth* is dropped upon it, whilst the Minister repeats these words :
 "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God, of his great mercy, to take unto himself the soul of our dear Brother here departed, we therefore commit his body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ."

We do not put the Body away as lost and perished. But we carefully lay it in the ground, believing that it will live again—"in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

You will observe too that we do not declare our belief that *the Person* we are burying will rise to everlasting life. It is not *his* resurrection, but *the* resurrection, that we are speaking of. And again, we do not say that *his* body will be like Christ's glorious body ; but that *our* vile body (that is, the bodies of all true Christians) will be so changed.

The Person being now buried, a comforting sentence from Scripture is read, to console those who are gathered round his grave. It is a verse taken from the book of Revelation,

in which St. John says, "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, From henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours."

Since Jesus has now conquered death, those who die in Him—not *all* who die, but *those who die in Him*—are declared to be blessed; and we should believe them to be so. We need not therefore mourn hopelessly for such, but rather rejoice that they are with Christ, in joy and felicity.

And now we leave the Dead; and turning our thoughts inward, we pray for ourselves. For though *they* may rest from their labours, *we* are in the midst of ours, and have much need of God's help.

First we offer up the LORD'S PRAYER with the usual SENTENCES before it, "Lord, have mercy upon us." "Christ, have mercy upon us." "Lord, have mercy upon us."

Then follow two more Prayers.

In one we thank God for having delivered our Brother out of the miseries of a sinful world; and we ask Him speedily to complete the number of His elect people, and to grant

that we may be found among them, and be admitted to His everlasting glory for Christ's sake.

There are *two words* in this Prayer, which require explanation. One is the word *felicity*. We speak of "the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh being in *joy and felicity*:" this means *happiness*. Then again we pray that we "may have our perfect *consummation and bliss*" in God's eternal glory; that is, our *perfect and complete happiness* in another world.

The other Prayer runs thus; "O merciful God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life; in whom whosoever believeth shall live, though he die," (that is, shall live in heaven, though he die on earth) "and whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall not die eternally; who also hath taught us by his holy Apostle St. Paul not to be sorry, as men without hope for them that sleep in him; we meekly beseech thee, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, that when we depart this life, we may rest in him, as our hope is this our brother doth." All this is very close to Scripture, and most of it in the very words of Scripture.

And further we pray, "that at the general resurrection in the last day we may be found acceptable in God's sight," and receive the blessing which Jesus has promised to them that love and fear Him.

The whole Service is closed with one of the usual Forms of blessing; "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with us all evermore."

And now, what should be our feelings concerning Death? It is right to think of it without dread. It is right to mix up with it joyful, happy thoughts of what is beyond. It is right to feel that to depart and be with Christ is far better than the most prosperous life here. It is right to believe that for the Christian "to die is gain." But still Death is a very solemn thing, a solemn thing to prepare for, and a solemn thing when it comes.

When you next attend a Funeral, let your mind be filled with serious and holy thoughts. Think of *your own* death, which may be very near. And think too of that glorious

and undying state, to which our Service points.

As you stand before the open grave, feeling that all earthly things must soon come to an end with us all—when you look at the coffin which contains the mortal remains of some beloved Friend, not knowing whose turn may be next—pray that you may be prepared for the change when it *does* come. Say from your heart, “O God most holy, O Lord most mighty, O holy and most merciful Saviour, deliver *me* not into the bitter pains of eternal death.”

A Funeral must always be in a measure painful. But I will tell you what sometimes renders it doubly painful—it is when we are committing to the ground one concerning whose salvation we hardly dare feel even a hope ; for then indeed the whole service must be most distressing.

And there is another thing which sometimes gives us pain—not when we see sorrow on the countenances of the mourners, for we must expect that ; but when we observe a degree of thoughtlessness and levity on the part of any who are present. It is very distressing to see little children playing about the churchyard

whilst the solemn ceremony is going on ; or to observe people staring at the mourners, ynd not even taking off their hats, or showing other signs of respect, as the Funeral passes by. Surely every right-minded person will wish either to keep at a distance, or else soberly and devoutly to join in the service.

There is yet another thing which I might mention. It always strikes me that any great preparation for eating and drinking, either before or after a Funeral, is sadly out of place. It is necessary, I know, that if friends come from a distance food should be provided for them. But surely at such a time, when the feelings of relations are torn with sorrow, and when all hearts should be solemnized, anything like *feasting* must be altogether unseemly.

It may perhaps be well that I should close this subject by offering a few plain directions to any of you who may be called to take part in a Funeral.*

1st. On entering the Church, into which the coffin has been carried, go quietly to your

* See "The Funeral," a tract of the Christian Knowledge Society.

place, and offer up a few words in silence for grace that your heart may be kept right.

2dly. During the reading of the appointed Psalm, stand up and repeat aloud the alternate verses.

3dly. Sit and hearken with attention to the Lesson from 1 Cor. xv.

4thly. On leaving the church, follow the procession to the grave; and standing quietly there, listen thoughtfully to the words which are spoken whilst the body is lowered into the ground, and join earnestly in the Prayers which follow.

5thly. When all is over, go home, and think of dying, and try to do that daily, which you would wish to be found doing whenever death shall overtake you,

6thly. Live constantly in the expectation and thought of death. Try and say with the Apostle, "I am crucified with Christ;" "I die daily."

CHAPTER VII.

THE COMMINATION SERVICE.

THIS Service is appointed to be used on the First day of Lent. It is called THE COMMINATION SERVICE, because the word Commination means *Threatening*; and it contains a denouncing or threatening of God's anger against sinners.

Let us examine it.

The Service begins, like most of the others, with an Address or Preface. This Preface informs us that "in the Primitive Church there was a godly discipline" observed at the beginning of Lent. Now, the way in which this "godly discipline" was observed formerly, was this—On the first day of Lent, the Penitents (those who had committed some notorious sin, and desired to show openly their

sorrow for it) presented themselves before the Bishop, clothed in sackcloth, with bare feet, and with their eyes turned to the ground. They were then introduced into the Church, when the Bishop and the Clergy offered up certain prayers for them, and read some of the penitential Psalms. Then rising from their knees, they threw ashes upon them, and covered their heads with sackcloth. They then declared, that as Adam was driven out of Paradise, so *they* must be driven out of the Church. The like penance was inflicted upon them on the Sunday following. And all this was done, in order that the penitents might see how great a disorder they had brought into the Church by the sins they had committed.

This discipline was severe ; but it served to show the awful nature of sin, and the sad consequences of it on the persons who committed it, and also upon others.

After a time however, this custom was so abused by the Roman Catholics, that our Church ceased to observe it ; and then the Commination Service was drawn up, and appointed to be used instead. The great object

of it is to show God's wrath and indignation against sin, and to move people by the terrors of His judgments to condemn themselves that they be not condemned by the Lord.

The Address is as follows:—

“Brethren, in the Primitive Church there was a godly discipline, that, at the beginning of Lent, such persons as stood convicted of notorious sin were put to open penance, and punished in this world, that their souls might be saved in the day of the Lord; and that others, admonished by their example, might be the more afraid to offend.

“Instead whereof, (until the said discipline may be restored again, which is much to be wished,) it is thought good, that at this time (in the presence of you all) should be read the general sentences of God's cursing against impenitent sinners, gathered out of the seven and twentieth Chapter of Deuteronomy, and other places of Scripture; and that ye should answer to every Sentence, *Amen*: To the intent that, being admonished of the great indignation of God against sinners, ye may the rather be moved to earnest and true repentance; and may walk more warily in these

dangerous days; fleeing from such vices, for which ye affirm with your own mouths the curse of God to be due."

This Address is intended to bring the minds of the congregation into a grave and solemn frame. And then God's condemnation of particular sins is read out, so that, as in a glass, each person may be able to discern his own sins, and the curses he is exposed to; and may be led to turn to God with true and hearty repentance.

If you look at Deut. xxvii., you will see that Moses directs the Levites to assemble the people, and to read out these very curses before them. You will find that they are almost word for word the same as we have in our Service. They run thus—

"Cursed is the man that maketh any carved image." This shows God's wrath against Idolaters.

"Cursed is he that curseth his Father or Mother." Here God's curse is pronounced against all undutiful conduct to our Parents.

"Cursed is he that removeth his neigh-

bour's landmark." This is against all undue advantage and encroaching on our neighbour.

"Cursed is he that maketh the blind to go out of his way." All unkindness and want of feeling for the suffering and afflicted is here condemned.

"Cursed is he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, the fatherless, and widow." This refers to all unjust and oppressive conduct towards our weaker brethren.

"Cursed is he that smiteth his neighbour secretly." This condemns all secret injury of others, either in their character or persons.

"Cursed is he that lieth with his neighbour's wife." Here is God's curse against the Adulterer.

"Cursed is he that taketh reward to slay the Innocent"; that is, "Cursed is the man who uses violence towards his unoffending Brother."

"Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, and taketh man for his defence, and in his heart goeth from the Lord." We are reprov'd here for putting our trust in any arm but the Lord's.

The last curse seems to include *all the rest*.

"Cursed are the unmerciful, fornicators, and adulterers, covetous persons, idolaters, slanderers, drunkards, and extortioners."

After each of these Sentences is read, we are to answer and say *Amen*. Now, some have foolishly imagined that in doing so, we are in fact cursing ourselves and our neighbours. But what we really do is this; we acknowledge that what God declares is just, and that, if we thus sin against Him, we deserve His curse. For you will observe that it is not here said, "Cursed *be* the man who does so"; or "*may* he be cursed"; but "Cursed *is* he," or "he *is* cursed" who is guilty of any of these sins. Consequently when we say *Amen*, we do not express our desire that the thing may be so; but we merely give our consent to the truth of what is stated; just as we say *Amen* at the end of the Creed; as much as to say, "Amen, it is true."

Those who speak against this practice, should remember that they are in fact speaking against God Himself; for these are His words, and He it was who directed the people to declare their Amen to them.

It is true that Christ has taken away the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. But this only holds good with those who truly repent, and truly believe. For against all others the curse stands in full force. It is therefore fit that all should hear these curses read out—the *good man*, that he may own what his sins have deserved — the *bad man*, that he may be awakened from his security and ease, and be brought to repentance before it be too late.

After these curses have been declared out of God's Word, the Minister delivers an Address or Sermon showing that we are, all of us, more or less guilty, and have great need to humble ourselves with true contrition of heart. And you will observe that this Address is almost entirely gathered from Holy Scripture ; and a most solemn Address it is.

Let us now pass on to the Prayers that follow.

First, we do what is very unusual ; we offer up as a Prayer one of the Psalms of David, the Fifty-first. This Psalm was David's

prayer at a time when he deeply felt his sin, and mourned over it; and we now make it *our* prayer, the People repeating it with the Minister. And indeed we could hardly have a more hearty, earnest prayer, or one more suited to our wants.

Then next, we use the Lord's Prayer with *three* little Sentences before it, and *eight* immediately following it—the Congregation taking their part, and repeating sentence after sentence, alternately with the Clergyman.

The three Prayers which follow are full of earnest supplication.

In the first, we entreat God to spare, and to pardon, those who feel and confess their guilt before Him.

In the next, which begins with "O most mighty God and merciful Father," we acknowledge more fully our vileness and misery, and further entreat the Lord to spare His people, and receive them back to His favour.

In the third Prayer Ministers and People all join aloud, and with one heart and with one voice. We beseech God to turn us, and

so shall we be turned, and to be favourable to us who now turn to Him in weeping, fasting, and praying. We call to our remembrance His great love and mercy; and we willingly cast ourselves upon Him for the merit's sake of His dear Son.

The Service concludes with the Form of Blessing, which God desired Aaron the High Priest to use; "The Lord bless us, and keep us; the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon us, and give us peace, now and for evermore."

This is indeed a most stirring Service, and one that it well becomes us to use on the opening day of Lent. May that ever be to us a season of deep heart-searching, and a time for humbling ourselves before the Saviour's cross!

SUITABLE PRAYERS WHICH MAY BE
OFFERED FOR OUR CHURCH.

I. FOR UNITY.

O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace, give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great danger we are in by our unhappy divisions. Take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly union and concord; that as there is but one body, and one Spirit, and one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may henceforth be all of one heart and one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, and may with one mind and one mouth

glorify thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Service for the Accession.

II. FOR THE VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH.

O ALMIGHTY GOD, who hast knit together
thine elect in one communion and fellowship,
in the mystical body of thy Son Jesus Christ,
our Lord; grant us grace so to follow thy
blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living,
that we may come to those unspeakable joys,
which thou hast prepared for them that un-
feignedly love thee, through Jesus Christ our
Lord. *Amen.*

Collect for All Saints' Day.

III. FOR THE BUILDING UP OF A SPIRITUAL TEMPLE.

O ALMIGHTY GOD, who hast built thy
Church upon the foundation of the apostles
and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the
head cornerstone; grant us so to be joined

Lord.
together in unity of spirit by their doctrine,
that we may be made an holy temple accept-
able to thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Collect for St. Simon and St. Jude.

IV. FOR PREACHERS AND HEARERS.

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joined
O ALMIGHTY GOD, who by thy Son Jesus
Christ didst give to thine Apostles many ex-
cellent gifts, and commandest them earnestly
to feed thy flock ; make, we beseech thee, all
Bishops and Pastors diligently to preach thy
holy word, and the People obediently to follow
the same, that they may receive the crown of
everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our
Lord. *Amen.*

Collect for St. Peter's Day.

V. FOR FAITHFUL AND TRUE PASTORS.

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postles
ng the
joined
O ALMIGHTY GOD, who into the place of
the traitor Judas didst choose thy faithful
servant Matthias, to be of the number of thy
twelve Apostles ; grant that thy Church being

always preserved from false apostles, may be ordered and guided by faithful and true pastors, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Collect for St. Matthias' Day.

VI. FOR THE PEACE OF THE CHURCH.

GRANT, O God, we beseech thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by thy governance, that thy Church may joyfully serve thee in all godly quietness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Fifth Sunday after Trinity.



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WORKS BY
THE RT. REV. ASHTON OXENDEN, D.D.
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